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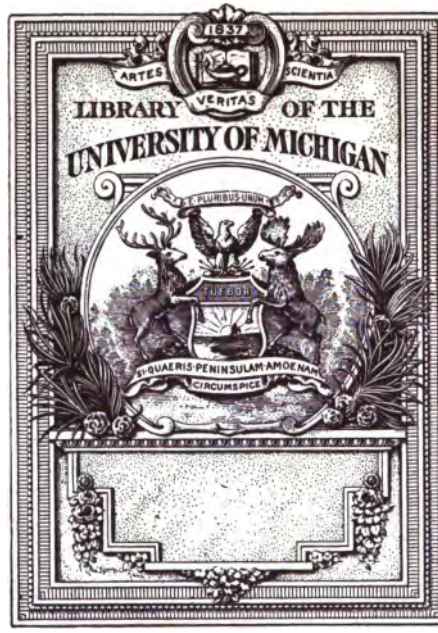
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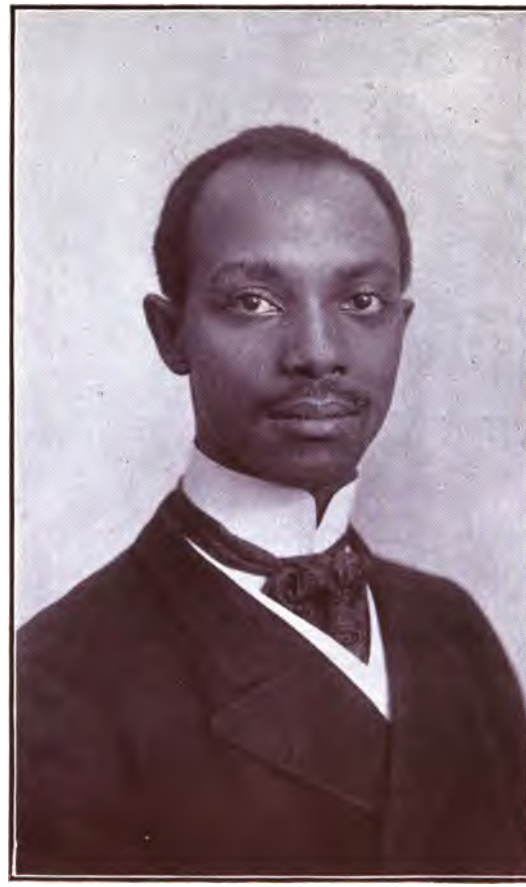

JAMES E. MCGIRT.

The Triumphs of Ephraim

By

JAMES E. McGIRT

Author of
"For Her Sweet Sake"—Poems

Philadelphia
1907

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Preface

I HAVE no particular Preface for this little book. I prefer to send a book out to stand on its merits. But, as a word of explanation, I will say that we are living in an age of strange happenings. Hardly a day passes without its chronicle of something odd.

Thus when your mind is wondering if such occurrences as are recorded in this book could really happen, simply ask yourself if there is any truth in the old adage, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

Very truly,

"THE AUTHOR."

"The Triumphs of Ephraim"

"Hail, the King and the Queen"

By James E. McGirt.

On this particular afternoon Ephraim sat out in front of the stable with his face buried in his hands, weeping unconsciously as a child. Amid the sobs he would say: "Why was I not invited to that party?" Then, as if in answer to his own question, he would murmur: "Because I am a coachman!"

Now, dear friends, do not pass judgment upon Ephraim and call him a coward, because he is a young man weeping simply on account of his not having been invited to a party. Every man who sheds tears is not a coward. I have known soldiers on the battle-field to wade, as it were, into the jaws of death without a flinch and snatch victory out of defeat, and the next day return to camp and weep over the letters of village maidens with whom they were in love, miles away.

Now, when I tell you that Ephraim was in love with a very pretty maiden, and that eight young men had banded themselves together to steal her from him —men far his superior, both socially and intellectually —and when I further state that on this particular afternoon they had cornered him to such an extent that he could almost see the girl of his heart being dragged from him forever, and he was not able to raise a hand or voice in his own behalf, I hope that you will at least suspend judgment upon him until you have heard the whole story, which I shall now relate.

In the year 1897, Mr. Lincoln, an old Quaker gentleman (white), hearing that, on account of some misunderstanding among the white and colored citizens of Wilmington, North Carolina, the colored citizens were preparing to leave the State, made it known far and wide that he had nothing against the colored race, but desired to help them. He furthermore caused it to be known that he had two hundred thousand acres of land or more in the central part of the State, and if they wished they might come, settle on the land and build up a city to their own liking, where they might make laws and govern themselves. He would give them much time to pay for the land, and not a foot should be sold to the whites. Mr. Lincoln not only had land but money, and he promised to use it in any way to assist those who might come. No sooner was this offer known than did the colored people of Wilmington sell out their all and flock to Mr. Lincoln's.

"WHY WAS I NOT INVITED TO THAT PARTY"

In less than a year there was on his place a little city, composed of eight thousand inhabitants. The city was known as Lincolnville.

Just about this time there was at Price University, an institution about forty miles away, a number of young men who were finishing their professions. Thus, these young men in a few weeks, with the aid of their parents, had established themselves in the city, each going about his calling with a bright future before him. Among them were men of almost every profession, and from a professional and business standpoint these, and a few others who came from Wilmington, had the city in their grasp. Mr. Lincoln and one other family were the only white people that lived for miles around. The city continued to grow, and these young men, finding themselves in need of funds to meet their demands, persuaded their parents to sell out their homes and come to live with them. The city continued to grow and so did their business. Mr. Lincoln, who had been watching the career of these men (knowing that this was a farming section and everything had to be done on a credit system until fall or harvest-time), came to their rescue. The young men formed their property and business into a kind of trust, gave Mr. Lincoln a mortgage, received their money, opened a bank, installed themselves as officers and directors, and started out in a business way to make their future. They did well, but the rapid growth of the city kept them ever enlarging their business in

order to meet the demands. This being the case, when the mortgage was due, Mr. Lincoln, not being in need of the money and knowing the circumstances, let them keep the money for their own use without renewing the mortgage, as they knew and trusted each other; renewing the mortgage for them would only have been a form.

Lincolnville was a model city, excellently arranged and governed. People from far and near came to visit it, and no one came but left a word of praise. In this city, as in all others, there were three classes of citizens—namely, the first or aristocrats, second or middle and the third or "low class." The classes were distinct, and as far as the third class and the aristocrats socially, they had no dealings at all. This distinction, however, caused no trouble, as the common class, with the exception of one young man, had no desire to "hob-nob" with the aristocrats. Thus, the people lived peacefully and happily.

In speaking of the classes being content to live among themselves I said with one exception. This one exception was in the person of a real dark young man, about twenty-one years of age. He was coachman for Mr. Lincoln, known only in the village by the name of Ephraim. He was found with Mr. Lincoln when the city began its growth. This young man was the son of a slave girl who lived until her death on Mr. Lincoln's plantation, as did her mother, both serving as cooks in the family. After the death of Ephraim's

mother, which occurred on his sixth birthday, it fell to Mr. Lincoln's lot to care for and rear him to manhood. This being thirty miles from any city, and Ephraim being the only person that Mr. Lincoln could use around the house, having no children of his own, Ephraim grew up almost in ignorance as far as book learning was concerned; he was just able to write his own name, yet being around the home since infancy his manners were excellent, and he was indeed polite.

Ephraim, as I aforesaid, was serving Mr. Lincoln as coachman and stood well in his favor. As he told me some time ago in conversation that he knew that he had been branded as one of the "common herd," as the aristocrats called it, but he felt something deep down in his bosom that he could not explain which told him that he was as good as any man, and as long as he was honest no one had a right to brand him or regard him otherwise. Thus, from the day society was formed in Lincolnville, Ephraim seemed to have turned his back upon the society in which he was placed and the middle class which was above him; branded himself an aristocrat and began knocking at the illustrious doors for admittance. Things went on smoothly, as no one regarded Ephraim seriously. He was looked upon as the "funny man," the amusement of all.

For had not Ephraim, in passing, brought notes from the professional men to the girls? Then why regard him? True, Ephraim did oblige one of his "chums," as he would call there with the delivery of the mes-

sage. He looked upon it as an act of friendship, but the young men looked upon him as being about his calling.

Things might have gone on this way for a long time had not one or two things happened, both of which were caused by Ephraim himself. He having made a boast of being one of the first young men in the city, and further said that there was not a young girl but whom he had gone with or could go with in preference to any of the professional men, exhorted the young men who were looked upon as belonging to the "herd" to follow him. When it was known that Ephraim was raising the ambition of the other young men and making such boasts, it was thought best to show him just where he belonged at once. From that day he felt the "cold shoulder" of all his former friends. This would have pained him very much had not a girl came into Ephraim's life which absorbed all of his interest. This girl was named Mabel, Dr. Price's daughter. Ephraim had not seen Mabel, but he had seen her photograph, and, in fact, owned two of them. One he kept near his heart, and the other in a frame in his room. It may be of interest to know how he came by the photograph of Mabel, never having seen her. It happened this way: Mabel was a very beautiful girl, widely known and well liked. In fact, she was considered the most beautiful girl of the colored race. She was of a dark, velvety, chocolate color, with hair outrivaling the dark, glistening, feathered raven, and no

new-born lamb ever wore more beautiful woolly locks; beautiful pearly teeth, hidden by a mouth like Cupid's bow, so beautiful was its form.

In that year the thirst for education among the colored race took a rise, and Dr. Price, finding that he had more applicants than the dormitory would accommodate, struck upon a novel plan to raise money for a new building; consequently, he had a hundred thousand photographs of Mabel struck off and sold them for a quarter each. In a comparatively short time the hundred thousand was exhausted and the building was almost completed. A number of the photographs were sent to Lincolnville. Ephraim purchased two, and was so thrilled by the beauty of the young girl that he vowed he would make her his wife or remain forever a bachelor. Thus, when he found that he was not wanted among the aristocrats he would console himself by saying that he had a girl greater than they were, both in appearance and class; as he put it, "Mabel was in a class of her own, all to herself."

The campmeeting at Raleigh's Cross-Roads, which had been in session for some time, was to close the following Sunday. This was a day looked forward to with great interest by the people of Lincolnville. Every person, no matter what might be his condition, felt that he must have new attire and go to the meeing in a conveyance of some kind.

This Sunday the fact that Dr. Price, president and founder of Price University, was to speak, did much

to heighten the interest of the occasion. He was to bring Mabel to the meeting, and the young men of the city were to be there and make it pleasant for her. When Ephraim heard that she was to be there he went to Mrs. Lincoln at once, and, after showing her Mabel's photograph, told her of his intentions regarding her and that she was his future wife; also that he would meet her for the first time on the close of the campmeeting.

Mrs. Lincoln, having to some extent regard for Ephraim, began at once to instruct him in the "gentle art" of pleasing young ladies. Ephraim was apt in learning, and in a little while she sent him away, feeling that his manner would attract the most cultured of the race.

Mr. Lincoln had just purchased a rubber-tired buggy, the latest and best model, the first of its kind to be shipped into the State. When he learned Ephraim's intention and saw Mabel's photograph, he was pleased with Ephraim's choice, and promised him that he should be the very first to use the buggy; he also sent at once to the nearest large city and ordered him the finest Prince Albert coat and silk hat that could be had.

Sunday came. Ephraim was up and ready bright and early; so were Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln. As he drove smilingly away, Mr. Lincoln, to inspire and encourage him, told him if he brought Mabel back he would have the house ready for them and give her a

royal welcome. Ephraim was driving away when he heard these words; he stopped and asked if he was in earnest. When he found that he was he went away with no other intention than to bring Mabel back with him.

As Ephraim drove down Liberty Street the clock struck six; he remembered the saying about "the early bird," for he was the only one on the way to the meeting, but he had great work in front of him, so he proceeded onward.

Ephraim had reasoned to himself that as the Doctor had arranged to speak at two o'clock, and, as the train was due at the nearest station at 6.12, more than likely he would want to refresh himself before he began to speak, and while so doing he would have Mabel to himself for a short time at least. He reasoned well; when he had driven into the yard and was about to unhitch his horse he saw another vehicle turn in from the road. Sure enough, it was Dr. Price and his daughter.

Ephraim at once began to put in practice his newly acquired etiquette. At once leaving his own horse, he introduced himself to the Doctor, and he in turn presented him to his daughter; thus he found himself on the road to win. He immediately took charge of the Doctor's team, placing it in a nearby stall, and returning, found Mabel and her father deeply interested in the new-styled buggy which Ephraim was fortunate enough to bring.

In a few moments the Doctor had learned a great deal about Ephraim, and expressed himself as delighted to meet such a bright young man of his race. He also stated that Lincolnville was blessed to have such a young man at the head of her affairs.

"Doctor," said Ephraim, "this being the day that we are supposed to give a few pennies to your University, as I suppose that you have not met any one on the way to contribute, I beg of you the honor of being the first to give."

With this he handed the Doctor a cheque made out by E. L. Lincoln, Senior. The president thanked him heartily, and seeing that the cheque was made out by the great benefactor of Lincolnville, a man he much desired to meet, began to question him as to what he knew of the great man.

When he found that he was foster-father to Ephraim, his estimation of him, though great, rose threefold higher. After some moments had passed and the people began to gather, the Doctor went to a nearby house to rest a few hours before the service, asking Ephraim to kindly see that Mabel was safe during his absence.

This delighted Ephraim, and remembering that she had shown some interest in the new buggy, suggested that he take her for a drive through the country. She very readily acquiesced, and they were soon whirling rapidly toward Lincolnville, which was only twelve miles away, and so fascinating did they find each

other's society until very soon the twelve miles had dwindled to two.

When this fact was noted Mabel was surprised, and Ephraim also simulated surprise, for all along it had been his intention of bringing her home with him; then, as they were so near home, he asked that she take dinner there, at the same time assuring her that she would be heartily welcomed.

Mrs. Lincoln and her husband were sitting on the porch engaged in conversation concerning Ephraim's fidelity; they heard the sound of horses' hoofs upon the gravel, and, on looking up, were surprised to see Ephraim, driving up with a young lady, whom they readily guessed was Mabel.

The thought struck Mr. Lincoln that he had told him if he brought her home with him that he would turn the house over to them, and now he would be as good as his word.

Mabel proved to be a charming guest. Dinner was served, and when Mrs. Lincoln attempted to make some apology for what she termed "a plain dinner," Mabel interrupted her, declaring that she did not know of what a better one could consist. Mrs. Lincoln answered her by assuring her if she would come again, and notify her beforehand, that she would know, as she would certainly prepare one.

At the table Mrs. Lincoln became interested in a double medal, made of gold and in the shape of a heart, which Mabel wore on her bosom. She learned that

the New England Conservatory awarded her the medal as a prize which she won in the classical course for harmony and melody of execution and composition.

When they had finished dinner all assembled in the parlor to hear Mabel play and sing. She was a singer of much native ability, coupled with the best training possible, both at home and abroad. While abroad she once had the pleasure of singing before the Queen, the first honor of its kind ever conferred upon one of her race.

Mabel let her slender fingers sweep over the keyboard of the instrument, and as she did so she carried her hearers into ecstasy; they at once recognized the touch of a mistress. She at first played a solo of her own composition, entitled "The Voice of Love." It was a story that every heart could better understand than express, and better in music than in song. It began with a strain of longing and expectance; and then, before one could adjust himself to the feeling, it drifted away into streams of Hope, Fate and Joy.

During the rendition of this selection all felt the spirit of emotion. At times they felt like weeping, then laughing, and before one could obey there came on a feeling of strange fear; all sat in ecstasy.

Mr. Lincoln sat gazing helplessly at his wife and then at Mabel. She then sang a selection, "Jerusalem," and, to the regret of all, rose to go, saying, "That she had more than nine miles to drive after leaving the church;" but Mr. Lincoln would not hear

of her going. He told her if she would sing another song he would put a "tongue" to the buggy, also two rested horses, and they could make the drive in about half the time.

Mabel then sang "Calvary," "The Eternal City," and then left them as hungry for music as they were at the beginning, but as the hour was growing late they felt that they must let the "Angel," as they named her, make her departure. Not, however, until they had gained her promise to return soon, and had also given her a cheque for the musical fund of the University.

As they drove away, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln stood in the doorway looking after them until they turned out of view. "Mother," said Mr. Lincoln, turning to his wife, "we have no children. What do you say to making Ephraim and Mabel our real son and daughter?"

Mrs. Lincoln answered, "It would be like bringing to me new life, father, if it could only be."

"It must be," said he, "and we must help our son to gain Mabel as his bride."

While Ephraim and his new parents were beaming with the joy of having spent a few pleasant hours with Mabel, there were other hearts scorching under the heat of the flames which their pleasure had caused. They were the twelve young men whose sole object in coming to the meeting was to make it pleasant for Mabel.

When they arrived that morning, at an hour they termed "early"—eleven o'clock—to their disappointment they found that she had been gone for some time with another, and that one a man not of their "cloth," worse still a servant, an illiterate coachman, who could not write his name in an intelligible manner.

This fact, however, was not patent to the ordinary observer, as his language and bearing were such as many men better learned would have envied. They were angry, indeed, and did not try to hide their displeasure from Dr. Price. They told him many things of Ephraim that he would have left untold had he been introducing himself, though nothing to his discredit as a man. They were at a loss to see how calmly the Doctor listened to their recommendation of Ephraim; but their say had come too late. He could read their countenances and from the expression judge that their story was told from jealous rage rather than actual fact.

The Doctor, finding that he and the young men were almost the only ones left on the grounds, pulled his watch from his pocket, and was surprised at the lateness of the hour. He had just began to make preparations for his departure, when Ephraim, with a fiery double team, drove up with Mabel seated beside him.

One glance at her rosy face would convince any one that she had been well taken care of and had enjoyed herself immensely.

The young men, though angry, managed to hide their chagrin enough to shake hands with Mabel and express to her their disappointment at not seeing her, and would have said more on the subject had she not been bubbling over with the pleasure of her trip.

When she had finished telling them how she had been entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, she displayed a cheque for fifty dollars, saying that after she had finished playing and singing Mr. Lincoln placed it in her hand, telling her to buy another medal, as she deserved two, instead of one; when she refused to take it for herself, he told her to take it for the musical fund of the school. He also told her that he would increase the size of it on her next visit, and Mrs. Lincoln said on her third visit (for they desired that she come often) she would make her donation.

When Mabel had finished talking there was no more time for speech, so they all shook hands and drove away, but not before Mabel had assured the "Elite" that she would grace their reception on "Labor Day," which was a little more than two weeks off.

The twelve young men, smarting under the pain that Ephraim's action had inflicted upon them, vowed to themselves, and to each other, that they would humiliate him before her face if it took their all.

Alas! they were reckoning without their host. They had never regarded him seriously, and this act was too much; it only proved to them that he must be dealt with in a serious manner.

"How can we humiliate him most?" This was the question of the moment. After much thinking and careful debate, it was decided that this punishment should be in the form of a reception in which all of the aristocracy would take part, and at which time the most popular lady and gentleman would be crowned King and Queen. Out of these festivities Ephraim was to be left entirely, and, to crown his unhappiness, Mabel was to be the Queen. It should be a kind of May feast affair, and all of the "Elite" from far and near should come together and see the acknowledged leaders of their society. *"The Afro-American Blade,"* the national paper of the colored race, should announce the names of all persons present, and in large letters let it be understood that only the "aristocracy" was invited. They knew all of their set as well as he himself would know why he was left out. But for fear that his humiliation would not be as complete as they desired, they decided to have put in, in letters larger than all of the rest, these words: "Ephraim Lincoln is not invited to this party because he is of the 'common herd,' yet who tries to be a leader. He is an impostor, who has no right to be among us."

The ceremonies should be elaborate, but the main feature would be the crowning. A large throne of flowers should be placed upon the stage behind a curtain, and all of the girls, dressed in white, should form a half-circle around the throne; and the men, in evening dress, should form the same around them. The

girls were to have white lilies in their hands. At the ringing of the first bell the King and Queen should take their seats, two small flower girls place the crowns upon their heads, and all of them should bow to their knees and sing in chorus, "Hail the King and Queen!"

This was to be kept a secret from Ephraim and the other citizens until the night of the fifth, "Labor Day."

As a mark of courtesy to the many people who would be there from all States to represent their society, Mabel was chosen Queen by the first ballot, and then by acclamation. After much balloting, which lasted two days, the different factions got together and elected Mr. Blount King.

The 3d of September had come and almost gone; all arrangements were completed. No one had gotten into the secret and would not have had it not been for "Fate," which often enters at a time when we least expect.

It happened this way: On the night of the 3d, when the committee, which consisted of Mr. Blount, the president of the bank (the newly-elected King), also the other head officers, had just closed their meeting and were returning home laughing over the humiliation which would surely come to Ephraim, they heard a noise as if some one were making a political speech. Turning the corner of the street, they saw a large crowd of young men gathered on the corner of Lin-

coln and Freedom Streets. Quickening their steps they were almost upon them before they were noticed; they then stopped in the shadow, so that they might see without being seen and hear all that was being said. From this point they could not well be seen, but had a good view of the crowd. To their surprise, they saw clearly, under the electric light, Ephraim standing on a potato barrel, shaking his fist and speaking with a force and vim that would have done credit to a Reid or a Douglass.

The fifty or more young men, who were his listeners, stood on tip-toe gazing into his face, with their mouths wide open, drinking in every word that fell from his lips, as if they were dew-drops from Heaven. The other young men, or as we might call them his unseen hearers, moved up a few yards, still in the dark, that they might hear every word.

As they did so, these words came flowing from Ephraim's lips into their ears: "Shame on you fine-looking young men of the so-called 'common herd!' shame on you! shame on you! because they brand you as common and unfit, you take it and go right on as if you were; shame on you! You have just as much right to say 'who is who' as they have. Don't they make their living off us?"

As he said this he reached back, with his hands in his vest, as if waiting for an answer, and the answer came.

TO THEIR SURPRISE THEY SAW CLEARLY, EPHRAIM STANDING ON A POTATO BARREL

"Yes, yes," they cried.

"Then, if we feed them, they are our servants; they call themselves professionals. I wish you could have seen the way I did them at the meeting the other Sunday; they rigged up and went to the meeting and had to sit and wait while Mabel and I were off enjoying ourselves."

Ephraim told them how he did the professional men at the meeting, and they regarded him as a hero. He exhorted them to follow him, and then proceeded to the climax of his speech with these words:

"Bill Blount wears broadcloth and a beaver every day. If you boys would follow me I would make him wear the knees out of his pants and the hair off that 'gourd' of a head of his"—bowing on his knees —"and raising his hat to me."

"Gee!" cried Nat Jones, one of his listeners, who doubled up and fairly shook the rags which he was attired in, "did you hear what he said about Mr. Blount, the banker? He's goin' to make him bow to him and raise his hat; wouldn't it take your bref?"

Here Ephraim began again: "And as for that stuck-up girl that he goes with, Cleopatra Smith, as I go home to-night I am going to stop by her house and hire her to cook for Mabel and I when we are married."

When he finished a shout went up from every throat and rent the silent night air, but it did not last long Ephraim had gotten personal; he had gone too far,

further than Mr. Blount could stand. He clenched his fist, lowered his head and made a dash at Ephraim which would have landed on him no doubt had it not been for the quick work of his friends.

Ephraim motioned the crowd back, "ran out of his coat," "squared" himself and begged the crowd to loose him, that he might come and get what he had needed ever since he left his mother's knee and forgot her teaching.

Mr. Blount's friends led him away, declaring that he couldn't afford to fight with such a man as Ephraim. As Mr. Blount strolled away, he cast a scornful look at Ephraim and said, "Wait until the fifth and we'll see what you can do." Then, as a parting shot, exclaimed, "Then the world will know what you are!"

These words raised Ephraim's curiosity; he yearned to know what would happen on the fifth.

After much effort, anxious to begin his torture, they broke over their original plan and let him know the next morning. He heard the full story, surveyed the situation, and saw that he was beaten without any chance to even raise a hand or voice in his own defense. He would be humiliated, and that badly; he saw in a vision Mabel, the girl of his heart, disappear from his grasp like one in a dream. Yes, his heart was aching, and all day he went to and fro with bowed head, devoid of all hope, praying that death or some other calamity would come to his aid, and make, if possible, an escape from the great humilia-

tion that would surely come to him on the night of the fifth.

It was the custom of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln to take an afternoon drive every day at four o'clock. Hitherto, when the hour came, it found Ephraim in the yard, all ready with the carriage, but this afternoon did not find him at his post.

Four-fifteen came and went, and still no signs of Ephraim. Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, at a loss to know why he was so late, strolled down towards the stable to find the cause. Before they reached the stable they saw Ephraim sitting upon the shaft of the carriage, with his face buried in his hands. Thinking he was asleep, they decided to creep upon him and startle him when he awoke. They crept up close to him without causing him to stir; they saw him reeling to and fro, with his face hidden, as if in great agony and pain. Hearing a sound come from his lips, they stood behind him a few moments to catch it. He continued to sob bitterly, and, amid the sobs, came the words quoted at the beginning of our story, "Why was I not invited to this party?" Sobbing a few moments more, he would pause, and say, as if in answer to his own question, "Because I am a coachman."

As he finished speaking these words, Mrs. Lincoln placed her hands upon his head and asked him to tell her why he wept.

Feeling her hands on his head, Ephraim sprang to his feet, utterly surprised to see who it was. Being

late, he rushed to the stable for his horses. Mrs. Lincoln, with a motherly voice, called him back, assured him that it was all right about the drive, if he would tell them what ailed him.

After much persuasion, Ephraim told them the whole truth; how they contrived to humiliate him in the eyes of Mabel, and how every one would know of it through the *Afro-American Blade*. When he had finished tears were running down Mrs. Lincoln's face, as she stood gazing upon her newly-adopted son; then, turning to her husband, said, "Shame on them to treat him thus."

"Cowards!" said Mr. Lincoln. "Ephraim, don't cry any more; you shall go to the party if I have to close up the whole town. Hear me, you shall go."

Ephraim stood gazing into the face that he trusted with the confidence that a child has in its parents. When he heard the assurance that he should go, hope returned, feeling that, with the aid of a parent, he could move mountains; he raised his head, a smile came over his face. He raised his hand and exclaimed, "If I go, I will be King!"

Mr. Lincoln returned to the house and wrote the following letter:

MR. W. L. BLOUNT,

President of Freedmen's Bank.

Sir: Doubtless you are aware of the fact that the mortgage on the syndicate, of which you have the honor of being at the head, is far past due. I thought

I would be able to oblige you with the use of the money for a year or two longer, or as long as it might be needed. I find now, however, very different. If you will notice the mortgage you will see that it is made out to E. L. Lincoln, Jr. As we have no children save Ephraim, and as he has been working for us since he was six years old and has never drawn his wages, not even a cent; and further, in consideration of his faithfulness to us, we thought to put his money out that it might draw interest, so that some day he would have sufficient means to enable him to live more comfortably. Ephraim, Jr., does not need the money now, but it seems that he has become dissatisfied over not being invited to a party or social, and he says that if he is not good enough to be invited his money is not good enough to give it. He is angry, and declares that unless he receives his money by nine o'clock to-morrow, he will close the doors of all of the twelve properties listed in the mortgage and place a large red flag of "Sheriff and Mortgage Sale" upon each of them. I do not say I admire the hurried course of his, but he is a young man, you know, and young men will do many things when aroused without due consideration. Yet as the bulk of what we have will more than likely be managed by him, I mean for the rest of my life to leave him to act at his will, so he will see his errors while I live and can aid him. Very truly,

E. L. LINCOLN, SR.

P. S.—I hope you can make it all right with E. L. Lincoln, Jr. I would suggest that you extend him an invitation to the party. E. L., SR.

He called Ephraim, handed him the note, told him of its contents, asking him to accept the invitation if they extended it and begged his pardon for the insult.

When Ephraim reached the bank with the note, he saw through the door of Mr. Blount's office the twelve young men sitting in an important meeting. He walked to the door of the office, handed him the note, and stood on the outside, as no one invited him to enter.

Mr. Blount opened the letter, read it over to himself, then aloud to all. When he had finished, Ephraim heard a deep, low groan coming from the inside of the room which almost caused the windows to shake.

Mr. Blount stepped to the door, threw it wide open with a sickly smile upon his face, grasped Ephraim by the hand and cordially invited him to enter.

As he made his appearance in the door, every person was on his feet, extending his chair and begging him to be seated.

Ephraim, seeing so many chairs offered him at one time, hardly knew which to accept, but knowing Mr. Blount to be his greatest rival accepted his seat. This was an anxious moment, and no time was to be lost.

"Mr. Lincoln," said Mr. Blount, "we are on the eve of a great social, and by some means your in-

vitation has become misplaced, but I say to you now we want you to attend."

All of those assembled said, "yes, yes," at the top of their voices.

Continued the president: "We are very sorry that the invitation failed to reach you, but we humbly beg of you to grace the affair with your presence. We cannot get along without you."

And the others said "Amen."

"Have you any special young lady that you would like to take?" further continued Mr. Blount.

"Well, gentlemen, if I go," said Ephraim, "I will have to take Miss Price."

As he spoke these words a silence came over the crowd.

"Mr. Lincoln," said Mr. Blount, "all have decided that I take Miss Price, and——"

But before he could finish the sentence, Ephraim exclaimed, "Then, gentlemen, I cannot attend. The other girls say that I am not in their class, so I cannot attend."

As he finished speaking he took his hat, and exclaimed, "I must be going, as it is growing late. Any answer to the note?" he asked, turning to the president of the bank.

"Only this," said Mr. Blount, "you may take Mabel. Lawyer Jackson will tell you the details to-morrow morning." And then they dismissed the meeting.

The evening of the fifth. The ground floor of the Odd Fellows' Hall was lighted and decorated to the fullest; more than four hundred ladies and gentlemen stood within, chatting merrily. It was indeed a beautiful sight. The ladies were dressed in white silk, all made in the prevailing fashion, the men in full dress. The automatic walls of the building had been removed, and it seemed to be a hall of glass. All the citizens, both young and old, had gathered on the outside, straining their eyes so that nothing would go on within those walls that they would not see. Ropes were stretched around the hall to keep the onlookers at the proper distance.

Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln and a few other old persons were the only ones invited within the circle of the ropes. They stood in the door, where they could see it all.

Finally, the sound of the gong was heard, the outer curtain rose and revealed upon the centre of the stage a throne covered with flowers, and two flower girls, with wings, represented the angels, waiting with the crowns in their hands. All of the guests gathered in a semi-circle around the throne. In perfect stillness they waited. Then the village clock struck eight. When it was finished, the gong rang out three clear sounds. As it did so the curtain raised back of the throne, and out came Ephraim, with Mabel on his arm. They were led to the throne, crowns were placed upon their heads, all of the guests bowed to their knees, and the

young ladies waved their flowers, and all joined in singing the chorus, "Hail, the King and Queen!"

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when Ephraim entered the door of his home, but at the door his foster-mother met him and almost smothered him with kisses.

Our story is nearly finished. From that evening Ephraim was the acknowledged suitor for the hand of Mabel Price.

One morning, about a month later, the daily paper bore the following announcement: "Dr. and Mrs. Price announce the engagement of their daughter, Mabel, to Mr. Ephraim Lincoln, Jr."

No surprise was felt at this, as it was an already foreseen fact. Ephraim seemed transformed; if his carriage was erect before it was more so now. His brow was free from all traces of care; joy shone in his flashing eyes and in his every movement.

During the twelve months which elapsed between his betrothal and marriage, Ephraim attended a night school, and so rapidly did he improve that none would have doubted his statement, if he had told them he was a graduate of the University.

One pleasant morning—just such a one as the morning on which he first met her—Ephraim took Mabel to the altar. He had for best man no less a person than Mr. Blount, the banker, and his erstwhile enemy. Mr. Blount not only accepted the position, but asked that it be given him as an especial favor. The other

young men were not left out, having posts of more or less importance. All had a hand in the wedding, and all were as enthusiastic in making it a success as they once had been in keeping him out of their social gatherings.

Mabel, looking if possible more beautiful than before, blushed prettily as she received the congratulations of her friends.

At the close of the evening the young men, who had banded themselves together in what was called "The Price Glee Club," surprised the bridal pair by rendering the same selection which they had on the occasion of their crowning; for this occasion it had been rewritten and dedicated to the King and Queen, now Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, Jr.

Ephraim took his bride to a lovely home, built and presented to them by Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, Sr., and there we leave them, with our best wishes for a happy sail over the Hymeneal Sea.

The Test that Failed

"Hush, Emma! don't cry any more; you did not steal the ring and you shall not suffer for it. If any one is to go to prison I will go myself. Cheer up, now. It is all right; get ready. It will soon be time for us to go to court; it is now twenty minutes to ten. Get ready; the carriage will be here in a few minutes. Don't be afraid. I will go with you, and when the case is called I shall walk up before the Judge's stand, plead guilty and you will go free. Hush! No use to tell me not to. You need not say one word. I will do it, and all the world could not prevent. That is all right about mother and all the rest. I have thought it all over, and in the face of it all I will do it. When mother hears of it she will not blame me. She always taught me that it was honor to give my life for a good woman's. I know you are good and honest. Nothing can keep me from this course. Mrs. Huntington says she saw you with your hands in her jewelry box, and her two servants say that they will swear that they saw you with the ring. I know they lie, yet their lies are enough to convict you. Now, I have one request to make of you, and that is this: You must

promise me that you will go back to college, finish your course with Horace, and if you love him, or any other good fellow, marry him and make your mark in the world, for yourself, the college and the race. Don't think of me. I will be happy. Yes, you can; you will have to let me do it, for I will. I say again, I will be happy. Don't think of me. If you were to wait for me it would be useless. I would not marry you, even if you loved me. I would never go in your company again. You are too good a girl to keep company with a convict—a rogue."

These are the words I chanced to hear a young man utter to a young woman a few years ago in connection with a case that I hardly think I will ever forget, though I might be spared to live a century. I have read in fiction of persons serving in prison to save some one they loved, but this was the first case in my life that I have witnessed, which reminded me of the old saying, "That truth is stranger than fiction."

In the year of 1895, when there was in this country what we might term a "money panic," many strange things happened that involved persons who hitherto had been regarded as strictly honest. But the one that I shall mention at this time concerns three young people, who were destined some day to make a mark in this country that could not be erased.

As all of the persons mentioned in this story are still living, I shall not mention their full names, but will introduce them as Emma, Horace and Albert.

Several years ago, when I entered college in beautiful Greensboro, I found in my class a young man whose name was Albert. There were many things about this young man I might mention, but they would hardly have any bearing on the subject in hand. One thing, however, I will state, that for the first five days I was in the class he impressed me as being one of the dullest specimens of humanity that I have ever seen in a school room.

But one morning there came to join the class two young people, a boy about Albert's age, and a girl a few years younger. It could be plainly seen that the young man, whose name was Horace, was deeply in love with Emma from the start.

Horace was a fine looking young man, taller by a head than Albert; he had a form like a Greek god, and for grace and manly beauty would have matched the fabled Apollo. Therefore, it was not strange that Emma should be instantly attracted to him. Her very heart seemed to leap from her bosom and go to him.

Albert, too, fell under the spell of Emma's presence, and his love, though seemingly hopeless, transformed him from the dull, stoop-shouldered being he was to a wide-awake man, beaming with hope, enthusiasm and ambition. Since the morning these three students entered school Albert's record as a scholar and gentleman has not been surpassed, not even until to-day. From that day a twofold struggle began—first to prove to Emma his superiority as a scholar,

and second, to prove to her which was the most deserving of her love.

And it seemed that she, too, began to try and impress upon the two young men that she was indeed worthy to be sought.

The spring of 1895 came and found these young people in their Junior year, filled with enthusiasm and ambition, dreaming and yearning for the spring of the next year that they might be able to go out in the world and realize the many air-castles that their fertile imaginations had constructed. Yes, they were yearning for the day when they would be able to appear upon the rostrum, make their flowery speeches and receive their all-powerful diplomas. Not only did they have confidence in themselves, but others, too, felt that some day the world would look upon them and call them blessed.

That year, when the closing exercise of the Commencement was being held and the Doctor was making his announcements, he stated to the audience that they should not fail to be present the next year, as some great things would be heard.

Said he: "The graduating class next year will consist of three young people whose speeches will be masterpieces of literature and whose lives will be beacon-lights for the race."

Their fame had already gone out, and when he mentioned their names the audience went wild and would not cease their applause until they had come

"I AM THINE"

upon the rostrum and had the pleasure of seeing their faces and hearing their voices. Then, after seeing them, the audience clamored "Speech! Speech!" and the Doctor, to please them, consented to allow them three minutes.

Emma was the first to speak. She made a short talk from the subject, "Women's Influence upon the World." Her sweet, melodious voice, pleasing manner and presentation, combined with her eloquent words, that went to the heart of every man and woman, took the house by storm. The delighted audience, having given away the flowers which they had bought, tore the bouquets from their bosoms and tossed them upon the stage until it was literally covered.

Then the two young men spoke. So great was the impression which they made that the President arose and said that if the time ever came when two colored men would occupy the position of President and Vice-President of these United States, they would not be a thousand miles away.

Amid the deafening applause of the audience, the "Delta Kappa Epsilon Musical Club" sang the closing selection, and, after much hand-shaking, they went to their respective homes.

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As aforestated, in this country there was existing what might be termed a money panic, and Emma's mother, who was a widow and failing in health, had expressed some doubt of being able to furnish enough

money to keep her in school the following year. This complaint found its way to the ears of Miss Flint, a Yankee teacher from the North, who was Emma's confidential friend. She no sooner heard this than she wrote one of her friends in Littsfield, Massachusetts, and secured a place where Emma might work as house girl and make sufficient money to defray her expenses in school the next year.

The two young men, having some doubts about finding employment in the South, as the factories were all closed, decided to go North.

Albert had arranged to go to Atlantic City and assist his brother, who was head waiter at the Melburne, but when he learned that Miss Flint had secured Horace a position in Littsfield also, thought it an unwise thing to let Horace be nearer Emma than he was, decided that his brother would have to find other help, as he meant to be in Littsfield that summer at any cost.

The first day of June came, and the three young students were found in Littsfield, peaceful and happy. So, too, were their employers.

Mrs. Huntington, with whom Emma had found employment, was a sociological student of no mean ability, and very, very wealthy and kind. Her servants were all Irish, and in truth she did not need Emma, but seeing an opportunity to study a member of the colored race employed her under the guise of a maid.

After a careful study of the subject, she found that

human nature was the same, whether clothed in black or white. Emma's artless affection for Mrs. Huntington and her pleasing manner soon won her so completely that she found herself loving her as though she was her own child. She treated her as such, and gave her a room next to that of her own.

Emma was an artist of rare skill, both with needle and brush. Whatever she touched seemed to be immediately transformed. A piece of plain white cloth and a few strands of silk would become a beautiful article of fancy work, which could, if placed on sale, bring an almost fabulous sum. Common glass, purchased at the five- and ten-cent store, with a bit of paint and a few strokes of Emma's brush, resembled freshly-cut rosebuds, sparkling with morning dew.

Not only did Mrs. Huntington have the pleasure of studying Emma, but the two young men, as they visited Emma once each week regularly—Thursday night—that being the only evening given to the "help" in Littsfield as their "off" night.

Albert and Horace both had to call on Emma the same night, which is not the most agreeable thing for two suitors to do. Finally, they struck upon a plan that worked like a charm. One would call early in the evening, have his say, and later on the other would call. When this plan had been fully tried, each began his procedure to win Emma's hand.

Mrs. Huntington's room being next to that one occupied by Emma as a reception room could easily hear

what was said by Emma and her beaux. She was ofttime struck with the earnest appeals of the two young men, and wondered how Emma would succeed in choosing between the two.

Mrs. Huntington, being on more or less confidential terms with Emma, questioned her concerning the two young men. She learned from her that she loved them both about equal. Emma also stated to Mrs. Huntington her inability to choose the one for her life's companion and asked her advice. To this Mrs. Huntington immediately replied that she was also at a loss. Thus, Emma was left to make her own choice, which by all means should be done before they returned to college.

Things went well until one night before the week that they were to return to college. Albert and Horace were invited to Mrs. Huntington's to take tea with Emma, Thursday evening, August 13th, at 7.30.

The two young men walked into the room where a beautifully decorated table, laden with flowers and many things inviting to the inner man, awaited them. In a few minutes all were happy and joyous. Laughter filled the room. Just as their pleasure seemed to reach its fullest there came a knocking on the door of the room. When it was opened, Mrs. Huntington thrust her head in, gazed at Emma a moment with stern face, then beckoned her to the door. It could be plainly seen that something wrong had happened. The door was partially pulled to, but failing to latch soon opened

enough to enable those within to catch a glimpse of what was transpiring outside.

Mrs. Huntington stood, with her two Irish maids by her side, gazing into Emma's face as though there was something far back beyond the cranium that she wished to see and understand. She spoke as though trying to do so without being heard in the room, and yet the young men heard as plainly as if it were loud peals of thunder these words:

"Emma," said she, "I have a painful request to make of you, but I want to say if you will do as I ask I will forgive you, for I know the temptation was greater than you could bear."

As she spoke, the color came and went in Emma's face, and when she had done speaking she was pale as a statue, with an indescribable expression upon her face.

"Heavens! Mercy, what have I done?"

"You have stolen my diamond ring," answered Mrs. Huntington, sharply, "and I give you ten minutes to get it or tell where it is."

"Oh, oh, I did not," cried Emma, and then she threw up her hands and fell in a heap on the floor.

As she fell, quick as a flash, Albert was at her side, lifting her in his arms, and, assisted by Horace, bore her to a chair, where he fanned her with his hat which he had hastily snatched up. They soon found she had not fainted, for she was weeping silently.

When it was found that she was not in a serious condition, Horace went to Mrs. Huntington, heard the story of Mrs. Huntington and the sanctioning of the maids. He tried to crush the affair by offering to pay twice the price of the ring, but he soon found that nothing of the kind could be done, as she seemed bent on having the law meted out to Emma to its fullest extent. When this was seen, Horace asked her three pointed questions. First, the kind of model and make of the ring and how much worn. To this Mrs. Huntington readily replied: "It was Kann's make, the 58 model, gift style, and not worn enough to be distinguished." She further said that the ring could be bought for seventy-five dollars. Horace had her repeat the dimensions, saying that if he saw it he could recognize it. When she had done so he stepped into the room, raised one of Emma's hands, stroked it with his own and bade her good-bye, but before he could reach the door two policemen walked in, as Mrs. Huntington had sent a "phone" message to the station for them.

The policemen seemed fully bent on taking Emma to the station-house, but after much persuasion on the part of the young men, who themselves stood for her appearance in court the next morning, and also at the suggestion of Mrs. Huntington that she keep watch over her all night, they consented to let her remain. When this was agreed upon and the others had gone,

Horace departed also, but Albert remained many minutes thereafter.

* * * * * *

Morning came, and at 9.20 Albert walked into Emma's room and found her dressed and ready to go. She was sitting, with her face resting on her hands, weeping as she was when he left her the night before.

As he stepped toward her she heard his step, rushed to meet him, threw her arms around his neck, and asked him, amid her sobs, "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

Albert bore her to a seat, wiped the tears from her face and said: "Hush, Emma; don't cry any more. You did not steal the ring and you shall not suffer for it. If any one is to go to prison, I will go myself. Cheer up, now; it will be all right. Get ready; it will soon be time to go. The carriage will be here in a few moments to take us. Don't be afraid. I will go with you, and when the case is called I will walk up before the Judge's stand, plead guilty and you will go free."

Emma protested, declaring that it would break his mother's heart and he should never do it. She continued to do this all through the drive to the Court House, and even as she stepped inside the door of the court room.

As they appeared in the door of the room, Horace,

whom they had not seen or heard of since the previous night, met them and led the way up front.

Asking Albert to excuse whispering, he told Emma how he had gotten Mrs. Huntington to give him the dimensions of the ring and where it could be purchased, caught the 12 A. M. train to Boston, woke the clerk at Kann & Co., bought a duplicate of the ring for seventy-five dollars, caught the train which left Boston at 8.10 A. M., and reached the court just in time to see the Judge a few minutes before the opening of the court. At this time he gave him the ring, which he said was given him by a slender woman dressed in black and driving a spotted pony. This woman, he said, could not bring it herself, as she was about to leave town. She also gave him the dimensions of the ring, which he handed the Judge on a card.

Emma, hearing the story conceived so cleverly and told so dramatically, moved nearer to Albert to tell him of the cleverly arranged plan.

At this time the court was called to order, and at once her case was called. While the charge was being read, the Judge began feeling in his vest-pocket for the ring which Horace had given him. When the charge was finished and before Emma could speak, Albert was on his feet, yelling like mad, "I stole the ring! I am guilty!"

In a moment Emma was on her feet trying to drag him to his chair, protesting, while Horace was on his

feet, calling to the Judge to exhibit the ring which he claimed to have found.

The few people who had assembled in the court room were amazed at the commotion. The Judge struck his gavel and the marshal at once had order. He had already handed Mrs. Huntington the ring for identification. He knew that the trial was a farce, as Mrs. Huntington had "phoned" him the whole procedure of the test.

Again the Judge waved his gavel. Stating that Mrs. Huntington had a statement to make, Mrs. Huntington stepped out before the Judge's stand and called Emma to her. Then she proceeded to tell how she had loved her, and, wanting to make her happy and comfortable for life, she had planned this test of the young men's love. Then taking from her purse three checks, each for $10,000, made payable to Emma, she pressed them into her hand, threw her arms around Emma's neck and whispered "Forgive me."

Soft and low, Emma replied, "Forgiven."

"Emma," said the Judge, "I am not here to judge you. I am here to try and help you judge the young man who has shown the greater love. You are the jury; all I can do in this case is to charge you. Thus I say, Albert could conceive of no way to save you, so he staked his life. You must decide whether or not he should have been clever enough to save you with a less sacrifice. In the case of Horace, he was clever enough to save you with little sacrifice, and the ques-

tion for you to decide with him is, If he could not have conceived of the plan, would he have staked his life? The case is in your hands," and with these words the court was dismissed.

Emma took the Judge's pen, and, after writing her name across the back of two of the checks, presented one to each of her friends. Then she turned to one of the young men, threw her arms around his neck, and 'mid the sobs of joy which she could not control, whispered "I am thine."

* * * * * *

We leave the readers to judge which of the young men this was.

At the Mercy of a Slave

I wish to tell you a story, one that will tear the black skin from the Negro's bosom and lay bare his very soul, that you may see and dissect it. I will call it "At the Mercy of a Slave," for want of a better title.

It tells of a Southerner, a man who owned slaves before the war and who believed in the institution of slavery.

I am that master, but at this late date that is neither here nor there.

It was in the early '60's, and when the country called I did not hesitate to answer her in her need. I am no prophet, neither can I read what is in a man's heart, but I declare to you that the morning I buckled on my sword, bade my young wife and little daughter good-bye and left them to the mercy of the slaves (there was not an able-bodied white man in the neighborhood) I felt a presentment of coming ill. Moreover, when I went out and shook hands with "Josh," a tall, black slave of about twenty-five years of age, I discerned in his glistening eyes, as if by some supernatural power, as plain as day, the fiendish, hellish plan which was to be perpetrated upon two helpless victims,

my wife and child, as soon as I had gone and they were left unprotected. I shall never forget the feelings that came over me on the day mentioned.

The war had already begun and the South was at this period in great need of trained soldiers to take charge of the raw recruits who were offering their undisciplined services. I had spent six years in one of the best military schools that the country afforded in that day, and was regarded by the Governor of my State so highly that I had been given a commission as colonel, and with it "Jeff" Davis had sent me a letter of congratulation. Needless to say that I appreciated the honor, yet I would have gone as readily if I had gone as a private to serve my country. I had already remained away from the front too long. Being a lawyer, and having a very extensive practice, I had many affairs to straighten out before I could take my departure. I was administrator for more than a score of families, and many of their affairs were so complicated that a hasty departure on my part meant ruin to most of them.

The months that I had remained at home, when I might say all men had gone to the front, wore terribly on me. Every time I read of a death in the Confederate ranks I felt that had I been in command it might have been otherwise. Moreover, I had another cause for being anxious to leave. Some rivals of mine had insinuated that it was cowardice and not business which kept me at home. That lie was started

by one who felt that the commission given me should have rightly been given him, and that there was some crook of mine which kept him from it.

When I learned that this rumor was being circulated I at once placed my unsettled business in the hands of a friend of mine, an aged judge, a man who, though crippled and infirm, was capable of carrying it out, and who remained at home only on account of his condition. In a short while after the rumor reached my ears I was ready and about to take my departure. No man cares to be called a coward, but when I was ready to go the feelings that overwhelmed me were almost enough to drive me mad.

I want you to put yourself in my place and imagine if you can how I felt. To leave a wife and a daughter, and to leave them helpless at the mercy of a slave whose hellish design was only too patent in the gleaming eye, and to know that that design, if carried out, meant the death of your wife and child; on the other hand, to have the call of your country ringing in your ears and the people of your neighborhood watching your every movement to determine your bravery or the ground for the rumor of cowardice which had been circulated. I don't know what you would have done, but I do know I was virtually an insane man.

Suppose I had killed Josh. Would that have made the safety of the women more secure when it was known I had killed him for something he had not done but that I felt sure he would do at the first opportu-

nity? I analyzed every plan that would relieve the situation, but could think of nothing. I returned home and told my wife my fears. After much consultation we devised a plan that we thought was the most feasible. She argued I might be wrong in what I believed and demanded that I give him a fair trial, and if I found in him the brute I believed was there she'd beg for him no mercy.

Just here I must say my wife was one of the pluckiest women in the whole country. Had it not been so she would not have come to the conclusion which she did.

I had a friend who lived about ten miles from us. He was home on furlough for six weeks, having just recovered from a severe attack of typhoid fever. Our plan was to have him to come down to my place, represent himself as a deserter from the army, and, taking advantage of my absence, enlist their sympathies, ingratiate himself into their favor by pretending to be at heart in sympathy with them; also by supplying them plentifully with all the delicacies so dear to the heart of the slave, not forgetting to provide the men, and especially Josh, with plenty of whiskey.

He was to arrive on the evening of the same day that I left (or was supposed to leave). In reality I would steal back as soon as the darkness became sufficiently dense to cover my movements, secrete myself and remain in hiding until he had perfected his plans. Then, with my faithful Winchester, I was to take up

a position near enough to my wife and child to ward off from them the blow I felt sure was about to fall.

My wife knew of these arrangements; therefore it was with a light heart I at last tore myself away, and left ostensibly for the seat of war. However, I especially cautioned Josh to take good care of my wife and little one. As I said this I saw, or seemed to see, a sinister expression flit over his features, though outwardly he was as docile as ever.

About half a mile from the house stood an old unused cabin, and though on the edge of my plantation, it was supposed by the Negroes to be haunted, and not one of them would go near it, even in the daytime. It was surrounded by a dense grove of pines, and shrubbery grew up to the very threshold of the door; therefore, I knew that I was safe from observance if I remained there.

About dusk I was rewarded by seeing my friend pass on his way to the house. It had been decided that he would secretly visit me and give me news of his progress. In my heart I believed he would progress, but hoped otherwise.

As I still had one week at my disposal it had been decided that we would not attempt to bring our plans to fruition until the fifth night after I had gone, and as I left on Tuesday morning, Saturday night was considered a good time. This night the slave regards as his especial time, and spends it, as far as he dares, in carousing and merry-making. Saturday morning

dawned cloudy and dismal, the wind sighed mournfully through the branches of the pines around me and occasionally rain would mingle with the fitful gusts. Toward evening the wind was hushed and an ominous silence seemed to settle over everything, or was it my disordered fancy? I could scarcely contain myself until the hour when my friend came to summon me to the house.

To my sorrow Josh had, after much urging and temptation on my friend's part, consented to destroy my wife and child, loot the house and be far away before the break of another day. I say I was sorry, because his father and mother were among my most trusted slaves, and I had raised him from infancy, but an anger so deep stirred my bosom that I felt no more compunction at shooting him than I had at shooting a favorite hound I once had who bit my wife's hand. I would deal out to him the death he would so richly merit.

I entered the house by a secret entrance, of which none knew the existence save myself and wife, and secreted myself, as had been suggested, in a large, old-fashioned wardrobe which was near the window—near enough for me to see across the yard.

My wife lay in bed, facing the window, seemingly asleep, but our little Bessie, knowing naught of danger, slept soundly, the sweet sleep of innocent childhood.

The clock over the stable strikes the midnight hour; everything is hushed, the same brooding stillness pre-

vails, the slaves have danced themselves to exhaustion and betaken themselves to their cabins. The air, odorous with the perfume of flowers, sickens me. I shall be glad when it is over. The last stroke of the clock has scarcely ceased re-echoing when out from the shadows glides a figure. By this time my nervousness has increased, so that I have left the shelter of the wardrobe and am standing in a little curtained alcove which commands a full view of the window. The figure comes nearer, lurching on its unsteady legs, half stops and drawing an almost emptied bottle of whiskey from his pocket places it to his lips and drains the fiery liquid to the dregs. Coming still closer to the house it stops and begins to soliloquize: "Kin I kill missis and lil missie? Yes, I will! I will! I is a slave, and if I stay here I'll die one. No, I can't do it." Thus he stands holding communion with himself. Again he speaks: "Yes, I will kill them and rob de house, and Marse Benson (that was my friend's assumed name) says he knows a place whar dis 'nigger' kin live like a white man. I'll do it. I ain't no coward. I'll do it and skin out 'fo day and day'll nebber see Josh er gin." His resolution seemed to be strengthened. Coming up to the window he puts out one black hand and pulls aside the curtain, while with the other he fumbles for the long dirk-like knife commonly carried by the lower class of whites, balances himself in the window ready to step to the floor. My grasp on my Winchester tightens; I itch to pull the trigger which would send

him tumbling to the ground below, but I am resolved to wait. He sits astride the window, then, as if fascinated, steps just inside the room and halts. My breath seems almost suffocating me, but I dare not move. The room is dark save for the faint light which comes in at the window. He can only distinguish the outlines of their forms as they nestle among the pillows, yet why does he pause? Why does he not strike the fatal blow? His hand quivers on the handle of the knife. The good angel and the evil one are fighting for the mastery. If ever human face showed as plainly as on a canvas, the workings of the mind within Josh's did that night. One moment it would become hard as flint, the next it would soften and his tall form would sway like a reed shaken by a storm. Finally, with great beads of sweat standing on his brow, he raises his head and in child-like tones says: "Oh, God, I am a slave, but I cannot be a murderer. I don't want to be a coward. I cannot kill two helpless creatures left in my care. I cannot, but somebody must die. I can't be a coward. I can't kill missis; I can't kill lil missie, but I kin kill Josh." And ere the last tones of his voice ceased he plunged the dirk into his breast and sank to the floor without a moan.

My wife sprang from the bed, while my friend, who was a physician, and I simultaneously leaped from our hiding-places and bore him to a couch, where a hasty examination was made of his wound, which proved to be dangerous, though not mortal.

HE SITS ASTRIDE THE WINDOW, THEN AS IF FASCINATED—HALTS

Josh's first words on regaining consciousness were: "Oh, massa, let me die. I started to kill missis and lil missie. Let Josh die." We calmed him by the assurance that we forgave him, and finally he dropped into a restful slumber. I remained at home a few days longer; then, as Josh was recovering, I left my wife to nurse him, aided by his mother and others of the plantation nurses. Dr. West attended him, and stripped as he was of his disguise Josh never recognized him at all as the deserter who had nearly caused him to commit the heinous crime.

My friend, I know I must have worried you, but I get to thinking of those days and often tell this to my friends to show that a black man can be trusted as much as any man under similar circumstances. Is that the bell? Some one to see me? Show him in. Good evening, sir. You have the advantage of me and yet your face is strangely familiar.

A voice soft as a woman's, but deep and masterful, pronounces the now unfamiliar words, "Master Geoff." "Josh," cries Colonel Langdon, and master and ex-slave clasp hands, while tears which neither feels a shame to their manhood stream down their faces.

In Love as in War

"Captain, here are my weapons; take care of them for me, please. I have come to ask you to bind me in chains and place me in the guard-house and keep me there. I love you, and I love the soldier life, and I want to die in the army; but last evening Lieutenant Vaughn and myself had some words about Princess Quinaldo. I do not think we can live out here in peace any longer, so I have come to ask you to place me in the guard-house."

While Sergeant Roberts thus spoke, tears were streaming down his face, for he was deeply moved. When he had finished, he stooped and laid his revolver and sword at his captain's feet, made a salute, walked over to the guard-house and stood waiting to be locked up.

In reading a statement a few days ago by one of the greatest soldiers of this country concerning the Negro's fitness as a soldier in the United States Army, this general gave the Negro much praise, declaring that he made the best soldier the world has known. He emphasized one thing as characteristic of the Negro, and that was his obedience to his superior officers.

Many other things he stated which brought to my mind things which I had experienced during my twelve years in the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry.

I am reminded of the case of a lieutenant and a colored sergeant of my company who had some trouble in a love affair, where the death of one or the other would have been the inevitable sequel had not Sergeant Roberts, who was better or more familiarly known as "Sarge," put an end to the conflict by presenting himself in the attitude, as described above.

Just a short while after the Spanish-American war had ended, our company was ordered to the Philippine Islands to quiet some trouble with the natives. It will be remembered that our company led the famous charge up San Juan Hill and won the day. We were "swapping lies" over our victory when the command came. As we were anxious for more trouble, we soon made our way to the Philippine Islands. No sooner had we landed than trouble came between the lieutenant and sergeant, but in a way we did not expect.

When we landed on the island and pitched our tents we were the talk of the natives in all the surrounding villages. The native papers were full of accounts concerning us, and in them every day were found pictures of our officers, including our colored hero, the sergeant just mentioned, who, though a non-commissioned officer, had made himself famous as above stated at San Juan Hill.

It will be remembered that when our company was ordered up San Juan Hill, in the famous battle, and the Spanish shell and fire were sweeping us down so rapidly that our captain gave the command "To the rear!" it was "Sarge," who had seen blood and in his rage yelled, "Hell to the rear!" and made a dash up the hill like a wild devil amid the flying shells, leading the company behind him and so startling the Spaniards that they dropped their guns and were so panic-stricken that they were soon buried in their own trenches, and, in truth, the day was saved by "Sarge."

When we think of this in connection with his many acts of bravery, we were not at all surprised that his picture appeared in the Philippine papers with those of higher rank. He was a tall, dark, brown skin man, about six feet in height. He had been in the company for more than fifteen years; he had fought in many skirmishes with the Indians and distinguished himself; therefore, he was easily the "pride of the company," and not only in the company, for his name had become almost a household word throughout the country. The Filipinos are a nation who naturally admire heroism and dare-deviltry in war, so when it was known on the island that this famous company had landed on its shores, the Filipino women, both high and low, began to flock around the camp, that they might see and know these men.

"Sarge," being dark in color, many of the native women, so to speak, "stumbled" over the commis-

sioned officers, seeking the privilege of honoring this war demon, "Sarge," if only to kiss his hand.

Notwithstanding the honors shown "Sarge," not one of them was jealous in the slightest except Lieutenant Vaughn, for they all felt that he was fully the bravest man in the company and deserved all of the honors bestowed upon him.

Lieutenant Vaughn alone evinced any sign of jealous envy. He had often spoken of the honors shown "Sarge" during the few days he had been on the island. Prior to his brave dash up San Juan Hill the lieutenant had bid for the favor of the company, and now that he had been eclipsed, it did not by any means tend to make him feel very good toward him. Yet up to the present no open outbreak had occurred.

Things went along well until Review Day, when all of the soldiers were on "dress parade," when they were to be inspected by the commander-in-chief. This is a great day with all soldiers, and each soldier was seen for at least a week in advance cleaning and polishing his gun and getting his uniform in proper order, that he might make the best showing in appearance.

"Sarge," not to be outdone, ordered a special uniform for the occasion, and swore to himself that he would be outshone by none.

The day came, the bugle sounded, calling each man to his place. All around the field the native women

had gathered, taking positions where they could see every step the soldiers made.

At the right of the field the officers had ordered a number of seats to be placed, so that the women who constituted the wealth and royalty of the island might be comfortably seated. This was no more than a return compliment to them, for they had often lavished courtesies upon the officers. The women who occupied these seats numbered more than a score. Among them were some of the wealthiest persons of the whole island. Each one came in elaborate style and most fashionably clad. Aside from them, there were a large number of the ordinary class, or "common herd."

At three o'clock the bugle sounded, and the drill was on. The ladies raised their glasses that they might take in every detail of the military tactics. The soldiers clearly showed their proficiency in every branch of the work, it being pronounced excellent by some of the ablest authorities in the military service of our country.

The drill ended, many of the soldiers made directly for their tents; others strolled away to accept the hospitalities so lavishly showered upon them.

The royal guests sat in their carriages with trains of servants at their disposal, chatting away with the commissioned officers. Among the number was Princess Quinaldo, acknowledged as the Queen of the Island, both by right of beauty and wealth.

The lieutenant had recognized her beauty when he first saw her, and had said to himself that he would woo and win her for his wife or wed no other. The lieutenant was a graduate of West Point and a scion of one of New Orleans' most blue-blooded families, yet when his eyes fell upon this beautiful princess, who was closely related to one of the present rulers on the throne to-day and who had inherited more than a million in her own right, to say nothing of lands and cattle, thinking of these things he lost sight of the fact that there were women elsewhere of lighter skin, but he began with all his might to woo the princess. Many of his brother officers desired to do their share in entertaining her, but they saw that the lieutenant was, to put in common parlance, "hard hit," so they laid aside their desire to be with the princess, as they knew he was desperately in love with her and gave him full sway.

Perhaps he might have had her in his Southern home to-day had it not been for "Sarge," the colored soldier who had made himself conspicuous in the battle named. While these titled women were standing upon the field, chatting with the commissioned officers, the princess, who was surrounded by three or four admirers, including the lieutenant, spied "Sarge" coming from his tent, and was making his way to where some of his comrades were talking to a group of the middle class native women. As he had not spoken to any one, doubtless he was going over to cast

his lot with them. It happened just at this time the princess recognized him at a distance, and expressed a desire to meet him, as she had read so much concerning his bravery, and asked the lieutenant if he would kindly beckon him. This was unusual, but she being a foreigner he consented and reluctantly called "Sarge" over and introduced them.

"Sarge," with a broad and jovial expression upon his face and with his glib tongue, soon became the centre of attraction in the group. Knowing the commissioned officers, he could read by the expressions on their faces that they were not altogether shouting over his coming, so he made several attempts to leave, but unsuccessfully, until finally he broke away, excusing himself on some conceived pretext, which, being somewhat abrupt, was detected by the princess as well as the rest of the group.

After the sergeant had gone, with much handshaking the members of the party merrily wended their way to their homes, to prepare for the reception that would be tendered the commissioned officers the same evening.

While "Sarge" was in conversation with the princess she had passed him a souvenir in the way of an invitation to this reception. After he had disappeared he read the invitation, but as it was but a few hours before the reception would take place, and for other reasons, he decided he would not go, but would write his regrets.

The next morning, bright and early, as the carrier was delivering the mail, "Sarge" was handed a square envelope containing a sweet, violet-scented letter, bearing the monogram of the princess. With confusion, "Sarge" spread it open, and found, true enough, it was from the princess, expressing her regret at his not being present at the reception. She stated that the reception had been to her a failure simply on account of his absence. Many things she stated in her letter that gave him to understand that their friendship was genuine.

After many things which naturally would be said by an infatuated, love-stricken princess, she commanded "Sarge" to call that afternoon at three o'clock at a rendezvous near her home, that they might have their reception there, as many things were revolving in her mind and heart which she desired to make known to him. She also stated that she had written his captain in the same mail asking that he let nothing deter the sergeant from keeping the appointment. She had certainly done this, for before he had finished reading the letter, word came from the captain that he might be relieved for the day.

As the clock struck three, "Sarge" was seen entering the gateway, and the princess came out smilingly to greet him. They talked over many matters in swift succession, as though they wished to crowd a lifetime in a few hours. Finally, she became interested in a medal, inlaid with diamonds and sapphires, which had

been given the sergeant for his bravery during the many years he had spent in the service of his country.

"Sarge" had taken it off his breast and given it to her, with the assurance that she might wear it as long as she liked. She allowed him to place it upon her, declaring that she would always be as brave as he. He then entertained her with stories of his hair-breadth escapes and his daring encounters with the Indians, as well as in the Spanish-American war. They were thrilling stories, indeed, and startling. The princess found herself at times moving, as though she herself were facing the enemy or moving among the fire of the crafty Spaniards.

When he had described these things to her until she could stand it no longer, she clapped her hands and exclaimed, "Brave! wonderfully brave!"

"Sarge" declared that all of this he had done for her sweet sake, saying that years ago, in his imagination or at least in his fancy, he had conceived a beautiful woman almost her exact counterpart, and that he had longed and hoped to see her some day, but had often declared that he would never meet the princess his imagination had pictured until he had gone through the pearly gate and seen the angels that encircled the great white throne, but said he, "As fertile as was my imagination and as strong as was my fancy, I had not pictured a creature half so beautiful as you are."

As they sat, expressing their love and admiration, the lieutenant was seen just a few paces away, walk-

ing directly toward them. So deeply were they engrossed with each other that they did not notice his approach, but he had seen their every movement and was even near enough to hear their words before they became conscious of his presence. He loved the princess, and when he heard the words which passed between her and the sergeant he felt as though she were about to vanish from him forever.

When he came up to them his eyes were gleaming with anger; he was angry and could not conceal it. No sooner had he reached them than he began to give vent to his feelings, at first in a calm and gentlemanly way, but when he saw that the princess and "Sarge" loved each other and took no pains to conceal the fact he became furious and began to speak as one somewhat in authority, both to the sergeant and the princess, until "Sarge" had calmly stated that he had said enough, in fact, too much, and pleaded that he would say no more in such a manner, neither to him or the princess.

After much discussion, which "Sarge" finally brought to an end by his gentlemanly yet commanding demeanor, the lieutenant finally uttered these words, which brought the scene to a climax: "Princess, I am a commissioned officer; 'Sarge' is simply a common soldier. He has disobeyed military orders already by his deportment towards me; that he well knows, but I am not discussing that here, as the army

codes provide for such and I can dispose of it at the court."

While he thus spoke, "Sarge" stood in rage, and one familiar with him could have seen that. He wore the same expression that he was said to have worn in one of his most daring exhibitions upon the battlefield, yet, knowing the powerful lieutenant, he curbed his anger.

Finally, the lieutenant turned to the princess and said: "Princess, I wish to put the matter before you plainly that you may understand. As I said before, I am a commissioned officer with authority; moreover, my parents are of the best blood in New Orleans. If you know anything about the people of my section of the country, you will know that your manner with 'Sarge' has been altogether insulting to me since the day I met you, and to all Americans of the company, not to say the least degrading."

Here "Sarge" spoke up. "Lieutenant," said he, saluting as was his place, "I wish to speak just these few words. I know I have no right to dictate to my superior officer, yet I am compelled to ask you not to make another such statement as the one just made to the princess. I not only ask this, but firmly insist upon it, and if you do not regard that request I say you must not;" with these words he again saluted his superior officer and turned to lead the princess from his presence.

But the lieutenant forestalled him in his intention by stepping in front of them.

"Placing the circumstances before you," he said, "I wish to say that under such conditions as before stated, you must now say plainly whose society you will hereafter prefer, 'Sarge's' or mine, as by no means can you entertain us both."

With a bow the lieutenant stood, awaiting the reply which would direct his future course.

The sergeant had succeeded in leading the princess a few paces from the lieutenant. She seized his arm, as if for support, and, with a fond look into his face, replied: "Lieutenant, the test in this case seems rather weak for comparison. To make it stronger, you might ask whose company would I prefer, that of all the lieutenants and generals of the world or that of sergeant, and I would say emphatically I would infinitely prefer the company of this noble hero to whom I am clinging to the world and all of its goods."

When she had finished, the lieutenant's hand went up to his face as though struck a stinging blow, and he uttered a groan that seemed to come from his very soul.

As he walked away he cast a most malignant glance at the sergeant, who was leading the princess affectionately to her home, as though he meant that the summary court in the morning would make a final comparison between a sergeant who dared to dictate

to his lieutenant and a lieutenant who had never before had his word disputed.

"Sarge," being of a brave character, did not let the little incident mar his evening's enjoyment, but loved the princess more for her brave stand, and told her to keep his medal forever, as she had performed a braver deed than he. She threw her arms around the neck of the great hero, and assured him of her love forever.

As the sergeant returned to the camp late that evening, after having received sanction from the priest for their union in wedlock at a very early date, he realized the trouble that the defeated and enraged lieutenant might make him in having him brought before the summary court on the morrow. Reaching his camp, he did not stop, but gathered his sword and other weapons, went to the captain's door, where he found him in conversation with the lieutenant. He saluted both, handed the captain his weapons, and asked that he be placed in the guard-house for the two weeks that remained of his enlistment; this, however, the captain refused to do. The lieutenant had already told him how the sergeant could not only win victories upon the battle-field with the hostile enemy, but could win as well in the game of love.

Then the lieutenant, by way of vainglorious boasting, said to the captain, loud enough for "Sarge" to hear: "The princess and 'Sarge' both deemed me sincere in desiring to win the princess, but in reality

I was only jesting to idle away the time. I, a scion of one of Louisiana's bluest-blooded families, unite with a Filipino; never, even though she were fifty times a princess. The blood of my ancestors would be forever tainted by the union."

"Sarge" took this for what it was worth and said nothing, but smiling a peculiarly knowing smile saluted and returned to his tent.

Three weeks after this occurrence found the sergeant and the princess living happily, man and wife. "Sarge" had received an honorable discharge, and were you to visit them you would see in their parlor a large gilt frame, in which is a record of his brave deeds, and words of honorable mention from his commander-in-chief.

Well hath he proven the truth of the adage, "None but the brave deserve the fair."

The Return of Mrs. Steele

This is no ghost story, no matter if Mrs. Steele did come back to earth after being dead more than two years. Had your love been as strong as hers, under similar circumstances you would have done the same. She said she would return, and she "made good" her word. An hour before her death she sent for me, and as I entered her presence I found her with folded hands, gazing upwards, with a smile upon her face which I can never forget. When she saw me she beckoned me to come, and as I did so she took the hands of Madge and myself, clasped them together and bade us kneel. As we did so she placed her hands upon our heads and breathed a prayer.

She bade us farewell, saying that she was going home to live with the Father, and that when we should have finished our life on earth she would be found at the portal of the pearly gate waiting to welcome us. Furthermore, she said she would watch over us, and that if the Heavenly Father would permit she would return often, and at the last day come and meet us in midair. She also had us promise to postpone our wedding till spring of the next year.

This we did. We had just been married two weeks when a summons came from the A. A. M. Railroad Company, by which I had been employed as civil engineer. I was to go at once to take charge of the construction of the suspension bridge over the C. F. River. This bridge was almost completed and had been left in the hands of the second man, my assistant, Marshall Taylor. The letter stated that he had met with an accident, and I was needed for duty, without fail, the following day at ten o'clock. It was only a matter of ten days before the work would be completed. Therefore, I must go and complete it.

I have often heard that it was not the best policy to leave a newly-wedded wife alone, at least for the first two weeks, and now I believe it.

The bridge was about fifty miles from Selma, the city in which I lived, and at least ten miles from the nearest village. Therefore, the workmen were compelled to live in temporary shanties and I was to occupy Taylor's tent. I could by no means take my wife; therefore, I had to leave her behind and content myself with seeing her once a week—Sunday. I had been at the works three days, and each morning as the express would slow up at the bridge they would throw off a small bag of mail, and in that bag each morning would be found one of the sweetest letters ever penned by a woman's hand; at least, so I thought.

Each evening, on the return to my tent after supper, I would write her as best I could the expressions of a

pining, love-sick heart. One Thursday evening I had just written an answer to the letter I received that morning, sent it to the office, and was reclining in my camp chair for a smoke. It was one of those perfect June evenings, that can only be appreciated by a man who is in love and feels that the girl he loves reciprocates his affection. I must say that other than a longing to be with Madge, I was indeed content. A king could not have been more so. I sat in my camp chair smoking and blowing rings of scented smoke towards the brilliant stars above me, and in my mind likened them in their brilliancy to my beautiful Madge, who reminded me more of them than anything I have seen, save a beautiful lily that I saw at the National Flower Show when it convened in Paris in 1900.

Just when my happy thoughts had reached their height I was interrupted by a messenger bringing me a telegram. I took the telegram from him, opened and read it. Glancing at the bottom for the signature I saw only the words "Friend A. A. P." Thinking it was sent by my wife through fun, I began to read the contents. To my surprise these were the words I read: "Come home at once. Save your home from scandal. A stranger is in the city, exposing your wife in the barber shop. He mentioned a birthmark upon her bosom shaped like a fan. He claimed to have kissed her rosy neck with an indelible ink stain on his lips, so that you might see it as proof that he had kissed

her. Has engagement with her for theatre to-night. Come at once.—Friend A. A. P."

The "A. A. P." was written in such a manner as to cause me to believe it was from a friend and brother in a secret order to which I belonged. When I read the telegram the most I remembered for a few minutes was the constant recurrence of this thought: "Yes, the birthmark is there; how did he know? What if I should find the ink stain on her neck?" Then my head became heavy, my eyes dizzy, and my limbs seemed to lose their strength. It seemed as though I was sinking to the floor, and all was blank for a few moments. When I awoke I found myself lying upon my bed, with a half dozen workmen, including the company's doctor, standing over me. The tent was redolent with the odor of camphor. In a few moments I was in a normal state, and the doctor consented to my going home unattended.

Looking at my watch I saw it was 8.45 P. M., and the express bound for Selma was due at the bridge on the old line at 9 P. M. Leaving word for my foreman to continue the work as best he could, as I was going home and would not return for a day at least, and with satchel in hand, I rushed to the bridge and boarded it just as the express pulled in.

As I boarded the train something of a change came over me as I realized that in a short time I would soon know the truth of the whole matter.

I read the telegram over and over as the train sped along. I was absolutely sure of its falsity until I read the words, "birthmark, shaped like a fan;" then I must confess I was at least anxious to learn the situation.

I have heard a great deal about men in this country trying to increase the speed of our trains, and until to-night they had seemed to go fast enough, but so greatly was my mind wrought up that every moment seemed five and the swiftly moving train was to my mind merely crawling. Such is the mastery of the mind over man. Had I been a wealthy man, and if the engineer demanded half of my wealth to double the speed of his engine, I would gladly have divided with him and thanked him for the favor. I must say that as fast as the express was, it seemed that a month was consumed in making those forty-odd miles from the bridge to Selma.

When the train arrived at the station, I rushed off like a wild man and entered the first cab I saw and bade the driver drive as fast as possible, and he did so. Reaching my home I rushed in without waiting a moment. On entering, I found the room dimly lighted, but no Madge. Hurriedly I went through each room, uttering calls for Madge all the while, but in vain.

Then it was that I felt convinced that Madge had gone, and that the message I received was true. Then

it seemed that my disappointment and fury reached its height.

I will say, even if it is concerning myself, that under ordinary circumstances I am of a calm and even temperament, but now it seemed that I lost complete control of my feelings. The devil had gotten entire possession of me and was using me at his will.

Unconsciously I had taken my sword from its place on the wall and whirling it in my hand. I was blaming Madge and praising the glittering blade that had done me such faithful service during the Spanish-American War. As the Grecian warrior, in Homer's beautiful poem, pleaded with his steeds not to leave him on the battlefield, so pleaded I that my trusted sword would make an example of the woman who betrayed my trust. In this matter I had no right to fear that either sword or right arm would fail when Madge would put in her appearance.

When I had fully fixed my mind upon dealing a speedy death to Madge, I heard the door open and she stood before me, somewhat frightened and strange. The strange look upon her face caused me to some extent to delay my action, at least long enough for her to give some account of herself.

"Horace," she cried, "why did you leave? Why did you send for me?"

These words had the effect of quieting me somewhat until she turned, and, to my horror, I saw the "ink spot" on her neck, just as the telegram stated.

At the sight of this a veritable demon of fury possessed me and transformed me from a mad man to a raging devil.

Throwing up my hands in horror at the sight of the stain, uttering savage shrieks and cries, I grasped my sword, and summoning all of the strength a devil can and fixing my eye on the exact spot which I felt would be vital, I aimed to sever it at the first blow.

As the sword came within a few inches from her neck I felt a blow upon my arm which sent the blade wide of its mark, and it was broken in two upon a table nearby. Turning, I saw a tall young man, panting and delirious, gazing at me with glaring eyes. Uttering something about "Christ" and before I could turn, he seized my arms in a vise-like grip, telling me he was a messenger from God.

At first I struggled with him, but seeing it was useless I became passive and waited to hear what he further had to say.

Seeing my changed expression, the stranger slowly and distinctly uttered these words, "All is well; do thyself no harm. I come to bring thee a message from an angel. I bid thee put up thy sword." Continuing he said, "I am he who has done you this mischief. I have tried to do you wrong. I will tell you the reason why. Years ago Madge and I were neighbors—children together. She was three and I was nine. One summer day, as we played together upon the lawn, I chanced to spy upon her bosom a birthmark in the

shape of a fan. Her mother guarded it with the greatest care, but by chance I spied it and remembered. I was out West when I heard you had married Madge. I loved her, but she always regarded me as a brother. When I learned that you had married her I was insanely jealous, and came with the intention of doing you mischief. I arrived in the city and saw by the morning papers that you were away. I waited until I saw Madge return home after mailing your letter. As she was about to open the door I crept up behind her and placed an indelible ink stain upon her rosy neck. Leaving her frightened and too dazed to raise an alarm, I went out and wrote you the message concerning the birthmark and bidding you come home at once, which I knew you would do. A little while before your train was due I came to your home, disguised as a messenger, and gave your wife a note saying you were at the office waiting for her. I brought the cab which took her away, to find you were gone. This is why you found her away. A few moments ago, while I was standing outside waiting your return, a light came to me out of the clouds and almost blinded me, and in the light was Mrs. Steele, Madge's mother, clothed as an angel, with a lash in her hands; she said she was conscious. She beat me with many stripes; she looked at me with blazing eyes and drove me in rapid haste to your door, bidding me tell you all, saying that if I failed to do so she would come again and woe would follow her coming. This is why I came.

All I have said is because Madge's mother bade me too. Now, I have a favor to ask of you in my own name."

Saying this, he paused, reached the broken sword and placed it in my hands. "Take it," said he.

I took it, and as I did so he tore, with trembling hands, the covering from his bosom, knelt trembling to the floor, and, with tears sparkling in his eyes, cried, with anxious voice, "Stab me, as I did you."

Before he could finish, Madge was between us, as if in fear that I would do as he asked; but my mind was far from doing so. I encircled him with my arm and raised him to his feet, assured him of my forgiveness, and we then and there swore eternal friendship for each other.

El Ria

The story that I am about to relate is concerning a woman, a fiddle and a race-horse. I am not going into details concerning my past life, but I shall begin the story on the morning of Friday, the 13th, for this was the morning that I for the first time had visited any city with a population of more than one thousand; the first time I had ever seen a train or a street car. I was born and reared in Virginia in Blank County, about thirty-seven miles from Washington, and at this date was twenty-three years of age. Thus you may know how I felt visiting a city for the first time in my life.

I had driven to Washington through the country, with a wagonload of produce to sell for myself and the neighbors. The products in my wagon were a bale of cotton and two coops of chickens, which were given me by the Widow Thompson, whose husband had died the spring before and who was very anxious over a mortgage which she had to give for his burial. At the time she signed the mortgage, so full of grief was she that she failed to acquaint herself with the details of it, so that she was much surprised when

notice of foreclosure was served on her ten days sooner than she expected. This little home was all she had, and finding she was about to lose it forever, she got together her only available assets, which were two coops of chickens, and learning that I was going to the city prevailed on me to take them with me, expressing the hope that they would bring her $35.00, so that she might pay the mortgage and remain in the little home which had sheltered her for so many years. The bale of cotton was mine. I had come to Washington to sell it, and with a part of the money buy a suit of clothes, in which I was to be married on the following Tuesday in the little church at my home. This was to be the event of my life.

About a year ago I met a beautiful girl, the daughter of the principal of the academy in our village. She was admitted to be the most lovable girl in the community. For me to have won this girl seemed to me like a miracle, for the morning I met her I was, to use my grandfather's expression, "Not worth the salt that goes in my bread." These were the very words he said to me two hours before the eyes of Madge met mine. It was a June morning, about nine o'clock. My grandfather, with whom I had lived nearly all of my life, my mother having died when I was but an infant and my father a few years later, came into the house and found me sitting playing on my fiddle, while my grandmother was spreading breakfast on the table before me. The old man had been up and on the

farm since four o'clock, as had been his daily custom since I could remember. As he came in, with the sweat dripping from his brow, he stood for about three seconds, with a frown upon his face; then, pointing his finger threateningly at me, he said:

"Rastus, when you finish eating your breakfast, so help me, it is the last you shall eat in this house. All of your life I have been working and taking care of you for the sake of your mother—my daughter. I've tried hard to make something of you. You won't go to school and you won't work; it seems that you are bent upon nothing but eating all I can 'rake and scrape' and playing on that fiddle. Now, when you finish your breakfast, I want you to take that fiddle and dog and leave this house, never to cross my doorsill again, for 'you're not worth the salt that goes in your bread.' "

Accordingly, as soon as I had finished eating, I made my clothes into a bundle and left them to be called for when I should become settled, took my fiddle, called Traylor, my faithful hound, and walked out of the house as bitterly insulted as could be, vowing that I would live on persimmons until Judgment Day before I would cross his doorsill again.

Walking down the main road about two miles I came to a large tree, and sat down beneath its shade to rest. I loved my grandmother, and the thought of leaving her made me sad. Seating myself, I raised my fiddle and began playing a tune which I had never

played before, and it was then that Madge, in passing, was attracted by the sound of the music, stopped, and became so interested that she sat down beside me, and in a short while, so quickly does the heart make itself heard, she had promised that she would, if need be, leave home, friends and everything, and as long as breath remained in her body would follow me and my fiddle.

From that morning I was a changed man. In less than a week I had secured employment on a nearby farm, and a little later I joined the church and began to prepare for the marriage, which was set for the next spring, twelve months hence.

I told no one of my plan, but made an agreement with my employer that I was to receive my board, lodging and clothes, and on the first day in June of the next year I was to receive a one-hundred-and-fifty pound bale of cotton, to be delivered at some cotton market. Having secured myself along this line, I at once began to show my worth to the church with which I had connected myself.

On this June morning I had gotten my bale of cotton as worldly goods and was the head deacon in my church, was loved and respected by all, and not only respected but trusted, as I must have been when I tell you that when they learned that I was going to Washington they took from the treasury of the church one hundred dollars and gave it to me, asking that I

buy them a new church organ, of Estey make, and bring it when I returned.

I say "loved and respected by all." I should have said "By all except Madge's parents," who had sworn that I should never, with their consent, become a member of their family. But Madge was a loyal girl, and said that she would not let her parents stand in the way of her future happiness. We had counted the cost, and felt that by judicious manœuvring on our part we could marry in the little village church, and, as she was an excellent soprano singer and I a player of no mean skill, that we could go North and win laurels for ourselves upon the stage. She had no money, but with my bale of cotton, for which I would receive one hundred and fifty dollars, I could with fifty dollars purchase a suit of clothes and a few other necessaries with which to make a showing and then have enough to take us before the footlights of some Northern metropolis.

Thus, you may imagine how I felt the morning after I had reached the city, disposed of my cotton and received the desired price for both it and the chickens. Having got these matters straight and after placing my horse in a stable, I strolled out to Pennsylvania Avenue, gazing at the electric cars and trying to figure out how such little "coaches" could run without either steam or horses.

As I reached a large building which I heard them call "The Mint," I noticed a string of cars filled with

people, as if out for a holiday. Thinking to myself that Madge would be pleased to know I had actually ridden on one, I boarded a car, to be carried I knew not whither. After riding for an hour, enjoying the novelty of the sensation for the first time, we came to a standstill, and as every one alighted, I did the same. The station I learned was Bennings, the great race-course, and that the whole world was waiting breathlessly to hear the outcome of the races which would soon begin within the enclosure, as this event would decide the supremacy of two of the greatest racing stables of which the world could boast. Two of the horses were American- and two were English-bred, and were owned by two of the sportiest millionaires of the age.

Being interested in horses and anxious to see the race, I pulled from my inside pocket the roll of money which I had and pushed my way to the gate to purchase a ticket, went in, and, after placing my wad carefully in a pocket made especialy for it, I began to take in the scene. Walking a few paces I noticed a young man, clad in a large-checkered suit, stop and fix his eyes on me with the same intent expression that a tiger does upon a lamb that has wandered from the fold into the jungle. He was of medium height, somewhat heavily built and had dark, piercing eyes that seemed to read my secret thoughts. After gazing at me for about five seconds he came to me, with outstretched hands and with as much affection as a

mother welcomes her son from college at holiday-time. He was smiling that broad, happy smile peculiar to the colored race.

Introducing himself as "Ike," he shook my hand and insisted that he knew me almost as well as he knew himself, only he could not recall my name. After several fruitless attempts on his part to do so, I gave him my name in full. He then shook my hand again. I did not remember ever having seen him before, but as he knew me I scolded myself for not knowing a friend as he represented himself to be.

To-day, when I think of him, I cannot help thinking what a good lawyer for cross-examination he would have made. I have been in High Court and met a number of lawyers, but I have never met one who could, with seemingly no effort, draw out from a man all of his past life as though at "confession" as Ike could. In less than ten minutes he knew where I lived, how much money I had, how I got it, and, in fact, knew all that I knew. He seemed to be deeply interested in me. He had selected me out of a great throng and come to show me how to pick up, as he put it, five thousand dollars as easily as if some one had placed it on my doorstep or I had found it in the street.

Taking me to one side he took from his pocket a "folder" or programme, on which were the names of the horses that were to take part in each race.

There were only two races to be run, the first between Pickett and Snowball, and the second between

Lucky Day and El Ria, from London and New York, respectively.

"Friend," said Ike, "you have in your pocket four hundred dollars. If you will listen to me and do just as I say, you will leave this place with the prettiest five thousand dollars that you have ever placed your eyes upon. I know what I am talking about. I have followed the track for fifteen years, and what I don't know about it is not worth knowing."

Then he ceased speaking, gazed affectionately in my eyes, then continued:

"Now, tell me this, don't you want to make five thousand dollars in less than an hour?"

I said "yes," for I certainly did want to.

"Then are you willing to do just as a man tells you who knows?"

I saw no reason to be contrary, and answered I would. He then took me by the hand, just as a father does his little boy as he goes to a show for the first time, and led me to where a man stood by a table piled with stacks of money as if they were no more than stacks of hay in a farmer's barnyard.

As we stood before this table, Ike assured me that I would take home with me at least one stack of those bills if I would only bet as he would direct. When he had assured me that Pickett in the first race and El Ria in the second would walk away from their competitors, or, as he put it, "leave them at the post,"

I raised only one objection. I was a churchman and could not bet.

"Friend," said Ike, "I am not asking you to bet if you are a Christian, for I am a Christian myself and would not on my life ask you to do what I would not do. I only ask you to lay your money and you will win just the same."

When he had succeeded in getting me to agree to all he asked, he spoke to the man with the stacks of money. I think he asked what odds he was offering on the races. I found that in the first race the odds were 20 to 1 against Pickett, and in the second 3 to 1 against El Ria.

Ike told me to place two hundred dollars on each race and go home a rich man. I did so, and after giving my number walked away with Ike to the track. No sooner had we reached the fence that separated the crowd from the track than a great stir went through the crowd, a bell rang, a pistol was fired, and I heard a shout, "They're off!"

The horses were off in a flash, Pickett leading. When I saw the horse leading that I had been assured would place five thousand dollars in my pocket I felt as if I were a Morgan or a Vanderbilt.

How fertile is man's imagination! I had in mind already spent the money. I had bought with it one thousand acres of the finest cotton land in my county, and as a surprise was taking home a fine automobile just like Lawyer Blake's, the leading man in our sec-

tion. I had even, by the aid of my money, overcome the prejudice of Madge's parents. I had in fancy done all of these things and was experiencing a very pleasurable sensation in having accomplished my designs. So sure was I that Pickett would lead all the way that I had taken my eyes from them. All at once the crowd began to shout, and looking up I saw Snowball more than three lengths ahead of Pickett and gaining at every leap; what was worse, they were not more than twenty yards from the post. I grew dizzy and would have fallen had not Ike come to my rescue. Snowball won by five lengths, and two hundred dollars that were entrusted to me were gone forever.

To lose two hundred dollars was bad enough, but to lose that amount which did not belong to me was worse. I was crazed. Ike saw it and slunk away into the crowd. Between the races a short recess was given. During this period I realized for the first time since I met Ike just what I was doing. All would have seemed like a dream had I not felt in my pocket and found it empty. It was no dream.

I had placed my money on two horses; one had run and lost, the other would soon run and perhaps do the same. Mercy! I cried. What if the second horse should lose? How could I return home? What could I say? What of the church organ? What of Widow Thompson's money? How could I face them?

What of Madge? Could I tell them I had staked the money on a race—I, a head deacon in the church?

I was now frenzied; tears streamed from my eyes. Wringing my hands, I walked to and fro among the finely dressed men and women, asking, "What shall I do?" No one heeded me. All was in commotion. Some were laughing and shouting over the result of the race. All but me were "sports," who had come to risk their judgment, bet their money and accept their fate—win or lose.

I thought of God and His power. The words came to my mind, "Ask what you will, doubting nothing, and it shall be done to you." I wanted to step aside and pray, but I looked at the clock and found that in a few minutes the race would begin. There was no time for stealing away in secret nor for pride, so I dropped upon my knees just where I was and made the prayer of my life. I called upon the Heavenly Father in earnest pleading that he would give El Ria speed and have her win.

"Oh, God," I said, "I know I should not ask Thee to take a part in this horse-race, but Thou knowest my condition. If Thou wilt deliver me I will never be found in the seat of the scornful, but will serve Thee the balance of my life."

When I had finished I heard the tinkle of the bell which told me the race had begun. Springing to my feet I rushed to the fence just in time to see the two horses dash away. They "broke" even and went off

in a dash, Lucky Day a little in the lead, but El Ria soon gained the few paces and both horses raced side by side. Thus they remained for the first quarter, but when the flag was reached which marked the beginning of the second quarter El Ria fell back and Lucky Day took the lead by more than a length and seemed destined to keep it the rest of the way.

Seeing El Ria dropping behind a stinging sensation crept over me and great drops of perspiration rolled down my face, although the weather was cool.

Finally, as the horses came to what is known as the homestretch, they seemed to understand that they were in a race; they began straining every nerve to be the first at the post. The jockeys, too, began crying and coaxing their steeds forward, but somehow neither could gain an inch. My trembling hands were pressing the fence until they began to grow numb. It seemed that by such effort I could aid El Ria to increase her speed.

Neck and neck and nose to nose, they came closer each instant toward the point which would determine my fate. Finally, the post was reached. No one could from the outside tell which was an inch ahead. As they passed it seemed that the hearts of the vast throng seemed to stop beating. Not a sound could be heard; perfect silence reigned. All eyes were fixed upon the judge, who lowered a pair of glasses from his eyes, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and in a voice clear and sweet began to call out, "El Ria——" but

YOU'RE IN LUCK, OLD MAN, EL RIA WON BY A NOSE

so overwrought was my condition that ere the last tones of his voice ceased reverberating I had become entirely unconscious of my surroundings and knew nothing until I awoke to find people gathering around me and saying, some pityingly, "Poor fellow, the excitement was too much for him;" others roughly, "He must be a "greenie," fainting like a woman."

I looked dazedly around until my eyes met those of Ike, who now bustled up with a great show of friendliness and slapped me on the back and exclaimed, "You're in luck, old man. El Ria won by a nose."

I jumped to my feet with a bound. I staggered as though about to fall. The reaction was almost as great as had been the action. The crowds were shouting, for the American horse had won from the English one. Tears streamed down my face. I wept, yet scarcely knew why.

I walked over to the table and was handed the six hundred dollars I had won. Ike, knowing I had not won the half of what he said I would, accepted the ten dollars which I proffered him and walked away without a word. I immediately left the ground and turned my steps toward the great organ house, where I was to purchase an instrument for the church. As I entered the beautiful building I was shown two handsome organs that could be bought for the money the church gave me, but my eyes fell on one of a better grade. I had in my pocket the one hundred and fifty dollars I had received for my cotton and

nearly two hundred dollars I had won at the race, so I put one hundred dollars of my money with that of the church and purchased it.

As I made my way home with it I came to a dense woods. No one was near, and I stopped and dedicated the organ to God. Often as I sit and listen to an instrument which the church prizes for its sweetness, I think how God makes the wrath of man to praise Him.

There can be but one ending to this story and that can be easily imagined. I married Madge and left immediately for New York. We have been here for two weeks and have been successful in finding a manager who would listen to us. We have performed our parts before him and a few critics whom he had present, and to-morrow night we will make our first public appearance. How we will be received I know not, but if Madge's voice will retain its pristine sweetness and my fiddle yields its wonted obedience I am not fearful of the outcome.

Lifting the Veil

In traveling through the Southland, tourists will find no character more unique than the old Southern "mamy." I have known many and found in all of them the same loveable traits. One thing is to be deplored; they are so rapidly dying out. With them will go many secrets, which if revealed would be both entertaining and instructive to coming generations, for they were loved and trusted by all who came in touch with them, so much so that they were entrusted with their most secret thoughts. Connected with a family I knew was an old mamy whom they called Aunt Diana, and in whose bosom was secreted romance, fiction, and that "truth which is stranger than fiction," enough to supply for a lifetime subjects for any one who has mastered the art of story-telling. Knowing naught of story-craft, I have always regretted my inability to properly clothe some of the facts as told me by Aunt Diana in her childish way. I have in an old note-book more than twenty outlines from which could be written as many different stories, had I the ability. I shall not try to write a story, but shall relate the facts concerning the first outline in my book as they were

told me, with the hope that they may come to the notice of some novelist, who may obtain a suggestion for a real story. I shall call this narration "Lifting the Veil."

"One evening, about eight years after the war," said good old Aunt Diana, "Jake and I were sitting in our little cottage, bitterly bemoaning our childless condition, when suddenly I heard a faint rap on our door, and, on opening it, who should be there but Miss Florence, or, as I should call her, Mrs. Clay, my former mistress, whom I had served before the war. In her arms she had a bundle, and as she undid the wrapping I beheld the sweetest little new-born baby boy imaginable. He lay fast asleep, totally unconscious of his surroundings. She at once placed him in my arms, and with tears in her eyes asked me to take him and rear him as my own. I was so surprised at first I could not speak. Seeing my hesitancy, she said:

"'Sit down, Dinah, and I will tell you the whole shameful story. This baby was placed on my doorstep last night, with a note pinned to its dress. Fortunately, I was the last to retire, and as I was fastening the window I saw the basket and took it in, so no one has seen it but myself and Mr. Clay. My son has always been a little wild, but I never dreamed it would come to this.'

"Seeing the question in my eyes, she said: 'Myra Mayhew, that pretty girl at the mill, is its mother.'

"Here the poor lady broke down and wept, asking us piteously all the while to keep the shameful story a

SHE AT ONCE PLACED HIM IN MY ARMS

secret, and promising to pay us well. Jake and I consented readily enough, not alone for the sake of the money, but for the love we bore Miss Florence. Then, too, this offer coming at a time when we were wishing for a little one to cheer our declining years, made us all the more ready to accept the charge. The only request Miss Florence made of us was that we go away where we were not known, and as we had never had enough money to travel very far since the war we were glad of the chance to do this. On leaving, Miss Florence gave me a large sum of money, which was sufficient, she said, to last until she returned from abroad, it having been aranged that she would leave immediately for Europe, to be gone one year and a half. Her son was to accompany her. When she returned we were to receive a sum of equal value. Little did either of us dream how many years would pass before we saw or heard from each other again.

"Having aranged these details, she left us, and the next morning we began to pack our household goods, and before the neighbors knew of our intention or had a chance to satisfy their curiosity concerning the baby, we had gone to make our home in the State of North Carolina, in a little town by the name of Reedy Fork. With the money we had saved and a part of what Miss Florence gave us, Jake bought a nice little farm, planted it, and started out to be happy and prosperous. This we might have been if the people among whom we settled had been different. They were inquisitive

about our business, but more especially about Eddie, as we had named the baby. They either could not or would not understand our silence regarding our affairs, and they began making unpleasant remarks, which were annoying to both of us, but especially to Jake. I tried to show him wherein, if he would turn a deaf ear to them, we would soon cease being annoyed, but he had a fiery temper, and, though easily controlled when sober, if he had had a little too much of his favorite 'toddy,' of which I must say he was only too fond, I could do nothing with him. One night, being a little intoxicated, he got into a "fracas" with a white man, and before it was settled guns came into play. Jake being, it seemed, the better marksman, inflicted what proved to be a mortal wound. Fortunately, he managed to elude his captors and escape. Before leaving, however, he was successful in getting a message home, in which I was instructed what to do. Frightened and anxious for his safety, yet I was able by the aid of the few friends we had made to get away without attracting any notice, and soon after joined Jake. I had to leave nearly all of my household goods behind, but the most heartrending thing of all was to leave the little home, which, though it had been ours for only one year, I had grown to love.

"This time we settled in a little village by the name of Canton, in the state of Missouri, far removed from the scene of our blighted hopes. Here we found the people, if a little rough, hospitable and genial, with the

open-heartedness peculiar to the people of the West. They asked no questions, expressed no surprise at anything, but took us in their midst and made us welcome. In a short while, so genial were our new friends, I almost ceased to regret my little home among the Carolina hills. We learned that it had been thoroughly ransacked in the vain attempt to find us, and afterwards burned to the ground. The detective force at this time being very deficient, the thousands of miles between Reedy Fork and us seemed to have placed us in a new world, entirely beyond their reach. With our names changed we began life for the third time. This narrow escape from certain death seemed to have worked a change in Jake. He no longer craved the fiery liquor, but became a sober, God-fearing man. Thank Heaven, in this home we lived without further trouble. Many times things went hard with us, and we felt that we could not 'win out' without the aid which would have been ours, and rightly, had we been able to communicate with Miss Florence. Jake could not write, neither could I, and there was no one we felt like trusting, and so we lived solely by the 'sweat of our brow,' and little Eddie, who was a hearty little fellow, had to go without the little luxuries with which we wished to provide him, but Jake and I both loved him, and counted no sacrifice too great to give him at all times as good a fare as was enjoyed by the neighboring children.

"During all of the years he was with us he never missed a day of school unless for illness or bad weather.

He finished in the public school at the age of thirteen. He was a bright little fellow, and we were very proud of him. Many times I longed to let Mrs. Clay know of his progress, but I thought of the old adage, 'Let well enough alone.' The passing of a single letter, I reasoned, might mean detection, so I refrained from so doing. There was an academy in the town where we lived, and the next year after leaving the public school Eddie was enrolled as a pupil. Here he was a model scholar, studying hard. He graduated with the honor of being second in his class.

"The village school, which he had first attended, was offered him, and this he accepted, saying, as he told us his decision:

" 'I wish to help take care of you and father. You have worked for me all of my life.'

"Right here the reader may wonder if Eddie never thought for a moment of the difference in our color and wondered if he were really our own son. If he did he never by word or look intimated it. After he had been teaching school for about two years he heard of a school where young men went to finish their education. It was called Douglass University. Eddie was very anxious to go, and we were no less anxious to have him go, so that summer, as soon as his school closed, he began to look around for other means of employment. Seeing an advertisement in the paper for agents for a new book that was just out on the

market, which offered very liberal terms, he accepted an agency, and all through the summer he worked early and late, saving up money to enter the university in October. I was sorry to have him go so far from home, for since we had never been separated, two hundred miles seemed an awful long distance, but feeling that it was for his good, I hid my feelings and helped him get ready to go.

"At first the loneliness seemed unbearable, but he was a dutiful child, and wrote us long, cheerful, newsy letters every week, and that helped to brighten us up. At the end of the first session he returned to us with a handsome gold medal, which was given him as the best all-round scholar of his class. This medal inspired us as well as Eddie, and so pleased was the faculty of the school with his ability and pluck that he was given a scholarship for the two years that remained of his course. This made it easier for us all. Jake, though getting old, was still active, and worked at the trade of carpenter every day. He found it paid better than farming, and I did odd jobs in sewing for the neighbors, and even for some of the white ladies in the town, so with what we did ourselves and what Eddie made in the summer we lived very comfortably.

"At last the third year of his school life was drawing to a close. Eddie had been such a brilliant student that his name was constantly on every lip. He was called the coming orator of the colored race. The citizens of

our town were so proud of him that they arranged to give him a royal welcome in the form of a banquet when commencement was over. For this purpose they had secured the Odd Fellows' Hall, which was the largest public building in the town. Eddie at this time had grown into a fine-looking young man. He had sent us photographs of himself taken at various times and in various costumes, and over these we would pore from time to time while eagerly awaiting his coming.

"Eddie had graduated with the degree of A. B., and every one called him 'Professor,' but, of course, to us he was still 'Eddie.' The day arrived and with it 'our boy.' Oh, how proud I was of him. Again I wished Miss Florence could see him. I was sure they would be pleased to see him now.

"Promptly at 8 o'clock a carriage rolled up to our door. Carriage, horses and driver were all gaily decorated with ribbons and flowers. We stepped in and the horses dashed off at a smart pace. We soon reached the hall, and as Eddie was being escorted to a seat on the platform the crowded house shook with applause. We were given seats nearby, and as soon as the hand-clapping had ceased the village band, which was a good one, struck up the air 'Hail to the Chief!' When all was quiet Elder Jackson, of the M. E. Church, arose and introduced Eddie as one of the rising leaders of the race. Eddie arose and with a graceful bow and a few well-chosen words thanked those present for their

royal welcome, and assured them of his pleasure at being present. After these preliminary remarks he launched out in a stream of eloquence which held his hearers spellbound.

"After this the banquet was served, and a magnificent one it was.

"Now that Eddie had finished his education, a plan of which I had long been thinking recurred to me. I felt that I should make some effort to find out if Mrs. Clay had any plan for Eddie. Although I was told to rear him as my own, and had done so, yet he was a man, and I wondered ought he not to know the truth, then he might decide for himself if he wished to remain with us or not. I did not know what to do, but after a talk with Jake he felt just as I did. So we asked Eddie how he would like the plan of going back to his birth place. He was delighted, so one morning, about six months after his graduation, we again turned faces toward our native land, for which I think Jake and I both were secretly longing. We notified no one of our coming; in fact, we did not know who to notify. So we reached home strangers in our own land. We stopped at a boarding house, and the next morning I wended my way to the home of Mrs. Clay. I knew not whether she was living or dead. However, I found the old place, which was but little changed, rang the bell, which was answered by a neat young girl, whom I asked if Mrs. Clay was at home. She asked did I mean

Mrs. Nelson (that was my old mistress) or Mrs. Wilbur Clay? Telling her which one I wished to see, I was given a seat and the girl left to summon Miss Florence. Now that I had come I began to feel a little nervous. So many years had passed, would she remember me?

"I was so lost in thought I did not hear the door open until a faint voice called my name. Quickly turning I saw Miss Florence standing in the door. I arose and she came to meet me with outstretched hands, murmuring in a faint, husky voice:

" 'Diana, is it really you?'

"I led her to a seat, and as soon as she recovered herself I began and told her all that had occurred since our last meeting. She in turn related her story, how she had returned from abroad, and Master Wilbur, feeling that he really loved Myra Mayhew and desiring to rectify the wrong he had done, braved public opinion and married her immediately on his return. How he had instituted a search for us, but without success, until finally they had given us up. After each of us had related our story, old Mr. Clay, Master Wilbur and his wife were called in, and, on hearing that her firstborn was living, it was with difficulty she was prevented from going into hysterics. A carriage was sent for Eddie and Jake, and as soon as Eddie entered the room, he was amazed to find four pairs of strange arms around him at once, four pairs of eyes eagerly

devouring him and as many voices calling his name. As soon as he could get the chance, he turned to me, with a look of bewilderment, and asked:

" 'What does this mean, mother?'

"There was a deathlike silence for a moment, as I, controlling my voice as best I could, said:

" 'It means, Eddie, that I am not your mother. I only reared you, and, though you could not possibly be dearer to me than you are, there is your mother,' and I pointed to Mrs. Wilbur Clay; and she, attempting to reach his side, fell into a swoon. Mr. Wilbur sprang forward, and after assisting us to lift his wife to a couch, he turned to his son and, putting his arm around him, asked, in heartrending tones:

" 'My son, can you ever forgive me? I have long since repented of my wrong and have as far as possible made reparation. I have searched for you far and near, but 'til now my search has been fruitless, but thank God and "mammy Dinah," we have met at last.'

"With tears streaming down his cheeks he turned to Jake and I, and assured us of his unfailing devotion to us for what we had done.

"Regardless of comment Eddie was at once installed into the family, and to those who were overcurious it is told that he is their adopted son. Jake and I were made independent for life, and have had built for us a lovely home on a part of the same lot where Mr.

Clay and his family reside. Though Eddie has found his own, he still calls me mother and Jake father. Every day he comes to see us, and very often spends the night with us, and in every way makes us see that he loves *us just the same.*

"Eddie has come into his own."

The veil is lifted at last.

FINIS.

From the Clutches of the Devil

When a young man says that he will do this or that "in spite of the devil," you may just put your foot down on it that he is in earnest and will do it regardless of the cost.

Furthermore, when a young man says that he loves a girl with his whole heart and will win her in spite of the devil, you may bet he is in love, and it will not be healthy for any one who tries to come between them.

I preface the story which I am about to relate with these remarks, as they will be brought out very clearly throughout this narrative. The happenings of which I am about to speak occurred in North Carolina, in a little village known as Bangor, about six miles from Salisbury.

We call it a village, but it should more properly be called "Bangor's Plantation," for it was no more than a large plantation, on which more than three thousand acres of cotton were planted and picked each year.

In winter there were not more than twenty-five people residing on this plantation, but as soon as

spring came the number would increase and would steadily continue until by the close of the season the inhabitants numbered about a thousand. Men, women, and children would gather at this place from fifty miles around to help carry on the work of the farm, and especially in the fall to help pick the cotton.

There were people of every description, as far as appearance was concerned. Handsome, passably so, and the homeliest were all to be found there.

But without going further into details, we will mention the four characters who figure most prominently in this story.

They were four persons by the names of Phoebe, Mose, Prince Hermann, and Josh. Though they all had surnames, they were better known by their Christian names as mentioned.

Phoebe was a beautiful little black-eyed girl, with a wealth of dark matted hair and a form which nature, unassisted by art, had molded into Venus-like proportions.

She was about 16 years old, and her home was about twenty miles across the Yadkin River.

Mose was not handsome, as far as features went, but his stature and carriage, being tall and erect, made him a noticeable figure wherever he went.

Aside from this there was nothing that would distinguish him from the ordinary young farm hand.

Mose, who at this time was 21 years of age, was one of the chief wagon men, and in the fall his duty

was to help haul the crops and see that they were properly stored in barn and crib. He first met Phoebe at her own home, across the river, having been sent to convey her family to this plantation when it was known that they could not reach there either by boat or train.

When Mr. Bangor sent him on this errand he left early in the morning, so that he might make the twenty-mile drive, remain overnight at the Jacksons' (who were Phoebe's parents), and start on his return to the plantation early the next morning. After many inquiries, he reached their home, and found them already prepared to depart for the plantation, which they did the next morning.

To Mose these people were simply the commonplace type, such as he had seen for years on the plantation, and so did not have any effect on him, but when he saw Phoebe, the third member of the little family, he felt that she was the most striking girl that had ever come under his notice. Though already entered into manhood, this was his first love, for he fell in love with her at first sight, and you who have experienced that feeling know what a well of love bubbles up in the heart when it first meets the girl whom you felt that it was death to be without.

To take his own words, Mose says: "The evening I saw this beautiful girl—tall, and lithe as a sapling—the world seemed rosy, and I felt like singing for joy. I knew that I loved her, and it was not long be-

fore I told her so; and, more than that, I vowed I would win her, if need be, in spite of the devil himself." He further said that if any one attempted to come between him and this girl, he would chase him to Hades, and if possible, search every hole and corner, find and destroy him.

When he began to tell of his feelings for her he would become a changed man. His tall form would become taller still; his eyes would glow like live coals, and he would express himself artlessly, yet more eloquently than any actor on a mimic stage. One looking at him would be reminded of a hero as he neared the climax in some Shakespearean drama.

Hearing him express himself, one could not doubt that he was ardently in love and determined to win the object of his love. This, however, was a case of mutual love, as was shown by their actions. Their dinner hour was spent together, sitting on a pile of cotton sacks, billing and cooing like two turtle doves.

As Mose was a wagon driver, his principal work did not begin until late in the afternoon, when it was time to haul in the cotton, the time that he had previously spent in sleeping he now spent by Phoebe's side in the cotton patch.

He would take his place in a row beside her and pick many sacks of cotton, which he would turn over to her to be weighed with her own.

The course of true love ran smoothly with them until three young men from the North, who formed

a little minstrel troupe, came to the village to give entertainments twice a week during the last month before the cotton-picking season closed.

They announced that their programme would vary, and each night would be more and more interesting.

The first night's entertainment was to be on Saturday night preceding the last four weeks of the season. As this was the first of the kind ever given in that section, the hall was packed to the doors. It had been announced that the entertainment would consist of singing, dancing, and works of magic.

The singing and dancing would be done by the two elder men of the troupe, and the works of magic would be performed by Prince Hermann. This young man was well styled, for he had been with the "Great Hermann," who excelled the world in this particular art, and before his death, anxious that the work might go on, and thinking a great deal of this young man, had imparted to him the secret on condition that he would take his name and carry on the work which he had done for a quarter of a century; and young Prince Hermann had obeyed him to the letter.

After the audience was seated the curtain went up, revealing the presence of the corked-face dancers, who sang and danced until the audience went wild with enthusiasm.

They were called back again and again until they had gone through the entire programme, and an hour

had elapsed with what only promised to be the first number on it.

When they had disappeared for the last time the curtain was thrown back, and out stepped a young man dressed as a magician and announcing himself as the world-renowned Prince Hermann.

Swaying his wand to and fro, he declared that he would perform some simple tricks that he defied the world to excel.

He asked that some one from the audience would pass him two glasses of clear water, which was done. These were then passed back through the audience, so that all might see that there was nothing in them but clear water.

To their satisfaction it was proven to be nothing but clear well water with no adulteration whatever. The village parson was standing near, and to him last of all the magician handed the glasses, for, said he, "I am sure you will be all the more positive if the assertion is verified by your pastor, who has ministered so long to your spiritual needs."

All were doubly assured and satisfied, until he announced that after he had changed the water into wine he would turn it into ink, to milk, and then into two glasses of the best brandy. A young man who was standing near the door arose and said that he was a good judge of brandy, and being a little chilled from the night air, he would promise to give them a reliable opinion if the brandy were passed to him.

Prince Hermann desired to pass at least one glass of it to the pastor, but he declined, saying that he never took anything stronger than a little locust and persimmon beer.

After much amusement, the glasses were passed to Prince Hermann, and he began his performance. Waving his wand gently over the two glasses, lo! in the twinkling of an eye they were changed into ink. After showing this to the audience, he placed them again on the table, and in a vernacular known only to the initiated, spoke, and the ink was changed into milk. Again passing his wand over them and uttering incantations in a sing-song tone, then winding up by saying quickly, "Presto, change!" he produced from the milk two glasses of sparkling brandy, looking sufficiently tempting to cause the liquor-loving among them to smack their lips with anticipation.

As he held the glasses up and announced that it was free for all to sample, a crowd of young men and boys rushed pell-mell on the stage, and the glasses were overturned in the general mix-up which followed.

His fortune was made. The sum realized by the entertainment had already exceeded their highest expectations.

When quiet had at length been restored he continued to perform. Various articles of apparel were taken from some young men in the audience; pro-

duced full-grown guinea pigs from broken eggs, and many other feats too numerous to mention.

Lastly, he took an empty vase—perfectly empty—sprinkled a little earth in the bottom, waved his wand, and, presto! change! from it grew a tiny rose bush, with a lovely rose nodding and swaying from its stem.

After making a few remarks, during which he continued to look in the direction in which Phoebe was sitting, leaning on the shoulder of Mose, he walked directly to her, and with a courteous bow, handed her the rose, with the request that she keep it until it had faded and then press it between the leaves of a book and keep it in remembrance of him.

As he handed her the flower, Mose noticed a change come over her face, and further noticed that the young magician held her hand very tightly, and he was not sure but he pressed it.

A presentiment told him that he was the serpent that would come into his Eden. This presentiment was a true one, for Prince Hermann had indeed fallen a captive to the beautiful country maiden.

Hitherto these three men who composed the troupe had been spending their time in Salisbury, but after that night Prince Hermann seldom left the plantation, but could always be found by the side of Phoebe whenever opportunity presented itself. Every day at the dinner hour Phoebe found herself with two suitors, Mose and Prince Hermann.

HIS EYES WERE GLARING, HIS LIPS DRAWN BACK, EXPOSING HIS TEETH SHUT TOGETHER, HIS HANDS CLENCHED, ONE ON THE HANDLE OF THE RAZOR, THE OTHER HANGING BY HIS SIDE, ALL THE WHILE HE WAS UTTERING CURSES AND YELLS LIKE A MANIAC.

He being the superior in every way, Mose saw that he had almost won her from him.

In order to bring our story to a climax, or to reach the crucial moment, we will have to leave out many events. It was the magician's determination to add this girl as one of the attractions of his little troupe. Learning that she had a good voice and was a graceful dancer, he told her to practice and take lessons from Josh, the elder of the two men, who was a most expert dancer. As it happened, Mose had to go to the city to get provisions for the farm hands. This caused him to be absent from the farm two or three days.

While Phoebe was taking lessons in dancing she was told by Josh that old fable that if she allowed the Devil to instruct her in the art of dancing she would become the best dancer in the world.

He told her that he was incurring the displeasure of Mose by being seen with her, but that if she could keep a secret he would tell her how to secure the services of the Devil with no harm to herself, and no one would be the wiser.

She consented, and he told her to steal out three Sunday mornings before sunrise to the forks of the road and dance from the moment the first beam of the sun met her eyes until she was in full view. This she was to do for three mornings, and on the third morning the Devil would appear, not to harm, but to teach her the finishing steps in the art of dancing.

He further told her that she was not to be afraid, as he would leave his pitchfork behind and come only for the purpose mentioned.

He told her that after the Devil came she would be able to dance better each time she tried.

As she was a brave girl, and being very ambitious, as she desired to become a professional dancer, join a troupe and go away to some large city, she consented to have the Devil come and teach her.

Now the cross-roads were about half a mile from Phoebe's home and about two hundred yards from that of Mose, and here she had danced as commanded by the crafty Josh for two Sunday mornings in succession. No one had seen her, so she felt safe in making the venture the third time. Josh, to make his word true about the visit she would receive from his "Satanic Majesty," set himself about carrying out his plans.

Going to an old trunk in which he kept his theatrical costumes, he took from it a suit which he had once used in playing "Faust." In this play he had taken the part of Mephistopheles; therefore he knew exactly how to proceed to make up for the dastardly part he was now about to play.

This done, he hied himself away to the cross-roads and secreted himself in a little hollow nearby, intending at the set time to appear and impersonate the Evil One.

It so happened that as Phoebe went tripping

through the woods Mose espied her, and thinking it strange that she should be out so early, resolved to follow her. Stepping back into the house he took from a chest a razor nearly a foot long, which he placed in his pocket and hastily followed in pursuit of Phoebe.

He reached a spot within fifty yards of the place where she was, and, unseen by her, secreted himself where he could see her and not be seen himself.

By this time she had laid aside her hat, and, true to her teaching, began to dance, with her eyes fixed upon the rising sun until it had shown about half of its red disc, when a figure as like the popularly conceived idea of the Devil as possible appeared from behind a pile of rocks and underbrush, emerged, and, holding one hand aloft, moved straight toward Phoebe.

Just as he was near enough to stretch forth his hand and touch her she turned and saw him.

Fear paralyzed her utterance; she tried to scream and run, but only succeeded in uttering a faint shriek, while remaining rooted to the spot. Fearing lest she should raise an alarm, he stifled her feeble cries with his hand, at the same time uttering the formula concerning her dancing that Josh had said he would, but to no effect. She seemed almost dead with fright, and he was now compelled to hold her to keep her from falling to the ground.

While wondering how he could get out of this pre-